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ABSTRACT

This document contains summaries of 48 research projects that were, with few exceptions, funded under Section 353 of the Adult Education Act. Discussed in the introduction are the distribution and stated purposes of Section 353 grants, the procedures used to locate the project reports summarized, criteria used to determine which projects would be profiled, and information about retrieving the copies of the project reports. The 48 summaries are grouped under the following section headings: assessment and testing (10 projects); curriculum and instruction (15 projects); participation and retention (9 projects); and surveys and evaluations (14 projects). Each project summary contains some or all of the following: ERIC Document (ED) and/or project number, date, state, contractor, purpose, procedure, summary of findings, comments, correlations/cross-references, contact information, and source from which copies of the full report and follow-up technical papers (if available) may be obtained. (MN)

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ED 377 320

Research Distilled

Summaries of Adult Education Act Section 353 Research Projects, 1989-93

Tana Reiff

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Research Distilled

Summaries of Adult Education Act Section 353 Research Projects, 1989-93

Tana Reiff

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Introduction

Section 353 of the Adult Education Act (Public Law 100-297) provides federal funds to states to be used for Special Demonstration Projects and Teacher Training. Most of Section 353's demonstration (or pilot) projects have delivered direct student services, and its teacher-training projects have provided staff development materials and training workshops.

A handful of projects, however, have used Section 353 funds for research, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, and for demonstration projects with an experimental design. The purpose of *Research Distilled* was to take a look at Section 353 projects of all types that employed an experimental design. What was being done between 1989 and 1993? How were these research projects designed? Of most importance, what new information have these studies produced?

Research under 353

A classic model of a research project supported by Adult Education Act special-projects funds is "Ethnographic Research on Word Recognition Strategies of Adult Beginning Readers" (Boraks & Schumacher, 1981). Granted through the Virginia State Department of Education to Virginia Commonwealth University, this serious academic study produced findings on adult beginning readers that have been widely cited and integrated into literacy curricula in Virginia and beyond.

Another, less academic, early example is "A Comparison of Community Linkage and Outreach Models for Maximizing Adult Basic Education," directed by Michael A. Ciavarella at Shippensburg State College (now Shippensburg University) in Pennsylvania. Though it did not compare a control group with an experimental group, or compare anything to baseline data, that study did survey ABE programs to compare the ways in which they were interacting with the general public.

In fact, experimental design of demonstration projects is implicit in the Adult Education Act. The *Federal Register* of October 28, 1991, describes the State plan required for submission by each State Education Agency (SEA) applying for an Adult Education Act grant. That is, the National Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73) amended Section 353 to increase to not less than 15% of each state's grant the amount to be spent for "special experimental demonstration projects and teacher training projects." Although each state may establish its own criteria and priorities for administering special projects, and two-thirds of the 15% must be reserved for training staff, the word *experimental* in reference to demonstration projects encourages the use of research methodology.

In Pennsylvania, the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education's funding guidelines have grown much more specific with regard to research. For FY1995, research—on curricula, delivery systems, techniques or processes, and data reporting—represents four of the state's eight funding priorities for demonstration projects. This emphasis provides the opportunity to study a situation or population related to adult basic and literacy education or to test new program ideas through demonstration projects using established research design principles.

A Source Book for Evaluating Special Projects (1988) suggests that 353 demonstration projects be "controlled studies using random assignment or quasi-experimental designs." Other methods include pre-post outcome measures, follow-up investigations, and analysis of data across demonstration sites. The authors cite the limitations of conducting pre- and post-testing within only one group; instead, they recommend the use of the nonequivalent control method, which employs comparison groups of students who are or are not using the project's program design. At the very least, group performance can be compared to norms instead of to a comparison group, if norms are available. The purpose of demonstration projects, says the report, is to *demonstrate* whether or not it is worthy of replication elsewhere. This determination can be made only through project designs based on objectives that will provide a comparison against which success can be measured.

Practitioner as Researcher

In several states, Section 353 is also increasingly supporting field-based practitioner action research as one staff development activity. A project called *Study of ABE/ESL Instructor Training Approaches* (1991, see page 30) identifies such ethnographic studies as "an effective staff development technique. Through action research, teachers identify the questions that interest them and plan for and conduct systematic inquiry in their own teaching environments as they work with their students ... The information and insights gathered through this process are used by teacher-researchers to improve their own practice and/or to share with others."

The Statewide Adult Basic Education System (SABES) in Massachusetts follows a systematic six-step process for organizing action research projects:

1. Learn how to look at the classroom. Keep a journal or discuss issues with other practitioners to identify researchable problems and explore possible interventions.

2. Form a research question. It should be interesting, focused, and finite enough to be answered within the constraints of the practitioner's time and resources.

3. Create a research design. Utilize quantitative and/or qualitative methods.

4. Collect data. Collection methods include keeping records, surveying published research, collecting students' writing, and administering tests.

5. Analyze data. This could be in the

form of a summary, graph, or chart.

6. Share results. This might be informally, with students or other teachers, or formally, in a report or a presentation at staff development workshops.

Quigley (1994) summarizes that "Action research ... has four distinct steps: 1) Plan, 2) Act, 3) Observe, 4) Reflect." This cycle can then be repeated "to test new insights and systematically observe and document how each new insight affects our practice."

A similar procedure may be followed by a "study circle," in which teachers collaborate to conduct the action research and meet regularly to share discoveries and techniques and discuss ways to improve both their teaching practice and their staff development program.

The Virginia Adult Educators Research Network, which is funded under Section 353, provides a system for coordinating action research. In 1993, Suzanne Cockley of the Network produced *The Adult Educator's Guide to Practitioner Research*, which follows essentially the Massachusetts model, as described above. Cockley assists interested practitioners in planning action research and coordinating their work. A profile of the Network's *The Year in Review, Volume 2: 1992-1993*, summarizes that year's action research projects on page 19 of this publication.

Locating the Projects

Research Distilled: Summaries of Adult Education Act, Section 353 Research Projects, 1989-93 set out to collect and read reports of all types of research projects conducted under Section 353 grants, summarize the findings, and compile them into a publication. We began under the assumption that we would merely request lists, presumably including abstracts, of all 1989-93 Section 353 projects from the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) Clearinghouse, then review final reports of those projects that utilized an experimental design.

However, the project evolved into a test of the 353 dissemination system as much as a review of the projects themselves. We discovered that the U.S. Department of Education's most comprehensive publication listing 353 projects is the DAEL Clearinghouse's *A Guide to Special Demonstration and Teacher Training Projects: Special Answers for Special Needs* (July 1993), which is billed as a compilation of "exemplary" projects. Through various research means, it became apparent that no comprehensive listing of all projects funded under Section 353 currently exists.

This realization necessitated a much wider search than anticipated. We proceeded to contact each State Literacy Resource Center directly to obtain lists state by state. For about half the states, we had to contact State Adult Education Directors rather than Literacy Resource Center Directors because many of the resource centers were just being formed. Therefore, it is possible that our correspondence never reached the appropriate person. After a second contact (three for Florida and Texas), we received responses from only 13 states: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Several of those states courteously responded despite having produced no research projects. Some states indicated that they do not have, or were unable to locate, central listings of funded 353 projects. A few states were able to supply abstracts of only the current or the past two years' projects.

Based on the state listings we did receive, we requested copies of final reports of every project that appeared to have a research orientation. There was no central source for these reports: some came from DAEL, some from ERIC, some from individual states, and some from project contractors. All of the Pennsylvania 353 reports were readily available from our State Literacy Resource Centers, and all projects were conveniently classified by type, such as "Research."

We also located several Section 353 demonstration projects of a research nature in the DAEL Clearinghouse's *Resource Update* that were not classified as such. In light of possible cross-classification, we pored through lists of all project descriptions in those bulletins and, in the absence of any classification at all, every state list we received, to try to discern from sketchy abstracts and sometimes only titles whether a project was in any way research based. This subjective search may have overlooked some projects that should have been included.

Another reason some research projects may not be profiled in this publication is that some final reports from 1989-93 that we requested were already out of print or reported by their listed sources to be "unavailable," or our request for a final report was not fulfilled. Conversely, some FY1993 projects were too recent to have yet entered the document stream.

In summary, we located research projects conducted under Section 353 of the Adult Education Act through the following means: 1) publications produced by Pennsylvania's State Literacy Resource Centers; 2) several ERIC listings or other references to ERIC document numbers; 3) *A Guide to Special Demonstration and Teacher Training Projects: Special Answers for Special Needs*, from the DAEL Clearinghouse; 4) at least two contacts to every state literacy resource center; and 5) corre-

Main Sources of Project Reports

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
The Center on Education and Training for Employment
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1020
614-292-4353
800-848-4815
Fax: 614-292-1260
Internet: ericacve@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu

ERIC Document Reproduction Service
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Springfield, VA 22153-2852
703-440-1400
800-443-3742
Fax orders: 703-440-1408 (24 hours)

Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) Clearinghouse
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202-7240
202-205-9289
Fax: 202-205-8973

PA State Literacy Resource Centers
AdvancE:
PDE Resource Center
333 Market St., 11th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
717-783-9192
800-992-2283 (in PA)
Western Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Resource Center
5347 William Flynn Highway (Route 8)
Gibsonia, PA 15044
800-446-5607, ext. 216 (in PA)

spondence directly to individual contracting agencies. We maximized use of one of our own State Literacy Resource Centers, as Cheryl Harmon of AdvancE fulfilled our numerous, scattered requests for original documents and ERIC microfiche. Overall, our search was conscientious but, of necessity, far from systematic.

The result is that this publication is not exhaustive; rather, it is a collection drawn only from those projects we were able to locate. Our inability to locate projects and secure final reports connotes that others would likely experience difficulty as well.

Also included here are three projects funded under Section 383 of the Adult Education Act—"evaluation projects" funded directly by the U.S. Department of Education through the Research Information Network.

Reading the Reports

Some of the reports we received were clearly formatted according to standard research-reporting protocol. Some, even if designed as research projects, did not follow standard research procedure; sometimes, project objectives strayed from the central purpose. From even some well-written reports, it was impossible to discern whether procedures were clearly planned and carried out or whether the premise itself was sound. However, from some reports, methodological flaws were obvious, and in several reports, the writer was candid in pointing out the study's weaknesses.

The following objective and subjective criteria determined those projects to be profiled for this publication:

1. The project was funded under the Adult Education Act, Section 353 or Section 383, between FY1989 and FY1993.

2. The project's final report could be located and reviewed firsthand.

3. The project had some sort of experimental design: a controlled study, collection and analysis of data, evaluation based on set criteria, etc. Only firsthand research projects were included, not those which aimed solely to survey the literature on a particular topic.

4. The project's findings were deemed worthy of reporting for any reason: they were exemplary, had broad-based applicability, could be validated or replicated, or had an unfulfilled or undeveloped premise which other researchers might be able to refine and develop in related future studies.

Typical of reports we excluded is that of a 1993 project which reported gains in reading and math scores of adult students enrolled in a five-county computer-based program without any comparison to scores achieved through a traditional delivery system, because a control group did not exist. Demonstration projects such as this that produced no comparative data—and they are numerous—did not meet our criteria of a research project.

Also, our search noted a number of similar projects done in several states, suggesting that grantees either did not (or could not) search the literature (as is requested in proposal-writing guidelines) or could have replicated, validated, or adapted another project design rather than duplicate efforts by pursuing the same basic objective from the ground up.

Document Retrieval

Each project profiled here lists an address for readers wishing to see a full final report. "Contact information" in the profiles refers to project producers, not document sources. DAEL Clearinghouse, ERIC, and Pennsylvania State Literacy Resource Center addresses and phone numbers are provided at right. As you proceed in securing copies, please keep in mind the following points:

- Check for availability with your State Literacy Resource Center first.
- If sources receive numerous requests, a recovery fee may be charged to supply the document. (Oregon, for example, charges fees of $3.50 to $37 for copies of 353 projects.)
- ERIC documents are generally available on microfiche through State Literacy Resource Centers. If you wish to purchase hard copies or microfiche, use the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (contact information at right).
- Pennsylvania project numbers are state-specific; any reports that are also DAEL or ERIC documents carry a separate number. Projects from states other than Pennsylvania listed no state project numbers.
- The reliability of retrieval sources is not guaranteed. Readers are "on their own" to further pursue the projects listed here.

Despite the retrieval problems we encountered, improvements in the dissemination system appear to be in progress. The National Institute for Literacy, funded under the National Literacy Act of 1991, has a work group on National Literacy Data Base Information Requirements, whose task is to link existing national literacy-related databases and State Literacy Resource Centers to form single-point-of-contact access to all national sources.

One more note: This publication was written by a "nonacademic" with the aim of describing projects in "plain English." Nevertheless, because of the nature of the subject matter and the reality that it will be of greatest interest to researchers, it was considered appropriate to employ a certain level of academic terminology, particularly in reflection of the style of the reports.

Herewith, then, are profiles of the 47 Adult Education Act research projects located and summarized for this project. Projects are divided into four sections of related subject matter—Assessment and Testing, Curriculum and Instruction, Participation and Retention, and Surveys and Evaluations. Within each section, the profiles are sequenced by date and alphabetized within fiscal year.

Resources Cited

Boraks, N. and Schumacher, S. (1981) "Ethnographic Research on Word Recognition Strategies of Adult Beginning Readers: Summary Report." Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University. (ERIC #ED213990)

Cockley, Suzanne. (1993) *The Adult Educator's Guide to Practitioner Research.* Dayton, VA: The Virginia Adult Educators Research Network.

DeLoayza, W.; Grosser, R.; and Bulkin, E. (1988) *A Source Book for Evaluating Special Projects.* Altamont, NY: Interorganizational Relations, Ltd. (DAEL #SA-300)

An Evaluation of the Statewide Adult Basic Education System (SABES). (1990-91) South Hampton, NH: Center for Resource Management.

A Guide to Special Demonstration and Teacher Training Projects: Special Answers for Special Needs. Projects funded under Section 353 of the Adult Education Act. (July 1993) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy.

Quigley, B. Allan. (January 1994) "Action Research: An Overview" in *What's the Buzz!* Troy, PA: Adult Education Linkage Services.

SECTION ONE

Assessment and Testing

Determining Reading Levels for Nonnative Speakers of English: A Study to Explore the Possibility of Correlations Between Nonnative Literacy (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) Reading Tests

Project #ED318289
Date: 1989
State: Illinois
Contractor: William Rainey Harper College, Palatine, IL
Purpose: In response to employers' interest in measuring adult ESL achievement, particularly reading comprehension, in grade-level equivalents, this project sought to determine whether there is any correlation between commonly used ESL tests of reading comprehension and ABE norm-referenced tests and, if so, to determine which tests are more highly correlated and whether any adult ESL reading comprehension test could be used to predict performance on ABE tests.
Procedure: The first phase of the project was to conduct a telephone survey of testing instruments being used in adult education programs in Illinois. The initial phone survey discovered that 39 ESL and 43 ABE-GED tests were in use in Illinois; 19 tests were being used for ESL placement and 12 for achievement while 17 tests were being used for ABE placement and 14 for achievement. Among ABE tests, the TABE was used by 60% of programs, with the ABLE a distant second. These two tests were selected as the ABE instruments for the study. Several ESL instruments were eliminated from the study for various reasons. The English Language Skills Assessment (ELSA) was selected for the study because it was widely used; however, it was out of print, so the Test for English Proficiency Level (TEPL) was added as the second ESL instrument, although it was not being used in Illinois at the time.

Subjects were solicited from the College of Lake County, Elgin Community College, Oakton Community College, William Rainey Harper College, and the ESL program of Township High School. Eighteen teachers were trained to administer the tests, and combinations of four tests were administered to 897 students by March. The sample was 53% Mexican, 9% Japanese, 5% Korean, 4% Polish, 3% Salvadoran, and numerous other groups represented by 1% or 2% of the sample.
Summary of findings: Some specific correlations between ESL and ABE tests were found: a range of .784 between the TEPL and the TABE-M and .644 between the ESLA I and ABLE-1.

The researchers recommended a new series of testing be conducted using only the TEPL-TABE-M and ESLA-IN and ABLE-1 comparisons, in order to increase the sample size for these tests that produced the highest correlations so that regression tables could be constructed.
Comments: The final report contains numerous statistical tables charting data on the samples as well as test results and correlations. These would serve as excellent models for anyone conducting a similar study.
Contact information:
Patricia Mulcrone
Associate Professor/Chair
Adult Educational Development
William Rainey Harper College
1200 W. Algonquin Rd.
Palatine, IL 60067-7498
For copy of full report:
ERIC

Identifying Valid Measures of Reading, Mathematics and Writing for Workplace Environments

PA Project #98-9040
Date: 1989
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
Purpose: To develop a screening instrument, to be called ALERT (Adult Literacy Employment-Related Tasks), based on realistic workplace-oriented reading, mathematics, and writing tasks suitable for use with adults in workplace education programs.
Procedure: Initially, the project developed appropriate reading, writing, and math prompts. Four expository reading passages were selected and rewritten to a fourth-grade level. Based on these passages, tests were prepared using both oral-reading and maze formats. For the writing prompt, it was determined that adults would be asked to write descriptions of their jobs. Math prompts consisted of 60 single- and double-digit basic math problems, also at a fourth-grade level. Field testing confirmed that the maze procedure was an adequate screening method and more efficient than oral reading.

During the next phase, the test instrument was field-tested on 53 subjects: six University secretaries, 23 students in the University's adult literacy program, and 14 graduate students.

The California Achievement Test, Level 18, was used for validating scores against the ALERT instrument. Both tests were administered to a validity group of 98 volunteer adult students recruited from Pittsburgh-area adult literacy programs. The ALERT only was administered to a normative group of 603 adults. Cut-off levels were determined to identify individuals who would possibly or definitely benefit from additional diagnosis or need literacy instruction.
Summary of findings: "Based on the validation data, ALERT appears to be an approach that can be used for initial screening and identification, particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics."
Comments: The developers stressed that ALERT should be viewed as an *approach* to assessment, that is that any company could produce its own specific curriculum-based measure along the same lines.
Correlations/cross-references: Correlations between the ALERT Reading Section and the Vocabulary Subtest of the California Achievement Test, as well as between the ALERT Mathematics Section and the Mathematics Computation Subtest of the California Achievement Test, were high, indicating "that ALERT tends to identify the same individuals requiring further help as well as those who do not need assistance." Correlation between the ALERT writing fluency test and the Written Expression

Subtest of the California Achievement Test were significant but not high. This suggested that the writing section should "be interpreted in a more general, informal manner."

Contact information:

Drs. Meryl K. Lazar and Rita M. Bean
University of Pittsburgh
Institute for Practice and Research in Education
5T23 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-648-7210

For copy of full report and follow-up technical paper:

PA State Literacy Resource Centers

For complete copy of the ALERT instrument, contact the University of Pittsburgh address above. Enclose $4.00 to cover copying and mailing.

Iowa's Norming Study of the Tests of General Educational Development

ERIC #ED314474
Date: 1989
State: Iowa
Contractor: Iowa State Department of Education, Des Moines, IA
Purpose: Because Iowa offers a state high school equivalency diploma to GED graduates who achieve a certain minimum score, it is imperative to that state's Department of Education that the two types of diplomas be as academically equivalent as possible. Therefore, when the revised 1988 GED was released, this study was conducted to determine how well graduating high school seniors performed on the new edition, providing data to describe and evaluate the score reference for GED candidates in terms of the percentage of high school graduates a GED candidate must exceed to obtain the Iowa equivalency diploma. Also, the study was done to evaluate and potentially review the minimum score requirement for the Iowa equivalency diploma.
Procedure: Between June 1, 1988 and June 1, 1989, all five of the revised 1988 GED Tests were administered to a national sample of 1,278 graduating high school seniors and 722 Iowa graduating high school seniors. Their scores were compared to those of 15,496 national GED graduates and 3,455 Iowa GED graduates.
Summary of findings: Pass rates on the GED Tests were higher for the GED candidates than for traditional high school graduates. This was attributed to a direct result of instructional programs offered to prepare for the GED through Iowa's community colleges.

Consequently, Iowa raised its minimum/maximum score standard of 35/45 to 40/45 without significant negative impact on the GED candidate population. This would satisfy requirement for a 70-72% pass rate among the norm group of high school seniors which requirement the state had set up.
Comments: It is notable that one state's norming study (though it included a national sample as well) would produce higher pass rates for GED candidates than graduating high school seniors. If this result were achieved in other states, it would hold the potential for greater credibility for the GED certificate and perhaps warrant the issuance of equivalency diplomas in more states.
Correlations/cross-references: The final report correlates this study to Iowa's GED Candidate Impact Study, which determined the impact of different levels for minimum score requirements on the passing rate for GED graduates and candidates as a whole and the impact of different passing scores of subgroups of GED candidates. That study was not examined for this publication.
Contact information:

Dr. John Hartwig
Division of Community Colleges
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146
515-281-3636

For copy of full report:

ERIC

Assessment and Adult Education: The Iowa Model

ERIC #ED321028
Date: 1990
State: Iowa
Contractor: Iowa State Department of Education, Des Moines, IA
Purpose: To document the qualities of excellence, accountability, and purpose that are present in Iowa's adult basic education population.
Procedure: The study employed a six-step process: create a task force; submit written assessment reports from ABE coordinators; develop, disseminate, and report major assessment outcomes cross-referenced by target populations and practices; identify major assessment procedures, practices, and outcomes prevalent across major population categories; record additional assessment procedures or practices; and develop a model that can be replicated for national use.
Summary of findings: The report summarized the findings as follows:

1. All ABE programs in Iowa use comprehensive assessment procedures or practices.
2. Six major target populations are served by the ABE program in Iowa.
3. Assessment procedures and practices include testing, student goal-setting performance measures, and other performance measures.
4. Iowa's ABE program is meeting the needs of its adult clientele as documented by Iowa's ABE target population studies and Iowa's GED norming study.

Correlations/cross-references: See the profiles for "Reasons for Nonparticipation Among Iowa's Adults Who Are Eligible for ABE," on page 20, and "Iowa's Norming Study of the Tests of General Educational Development," on page 7.

Also, this study is referenced in "Adult Basic and Literacy Education Assessment Instruments Evaluation Handbook," profiled below.
Contact information:

Dr. John Hartwig
Division of Community Colleges
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146
515-281-3636

For copy of full report:

ERIC

Adult Basic and Literacy Education Assessment Instruments Evaluation Handbook

Project #99-1009
Date: 1991
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Adult Education Linkage Services, Troy, PA
Purpose: To survey ABLE programs in Pennsylvania to determine what testing/assessment programs were in use, to review the literature on testing/assessment instruments relevant to ABLE in Pennsylvania, and to prepare a handbook containing survey and literature-review findings.
Procedure: A complex set of color-coded survey forms was mailed to every federally and state-funded ABE/Literacy program in Pennsylvania and to all other state directors of adult education asking for information on the tests they most commonly use with adult students. Five of the project's panel members, all of whom were well informed on adult assessment, each conducted five face-to-face interviews with persons associated with testing and assess-

ment in selected programs. Based on both survey responses (in a very high return rate) and the literature review, a handbook was compiled containing recommendations for assessing adults' educational performance, information derived from the project's surveys, comments on individual standardized tests, and a section on alternative assessment.
Summary of findings: Numerical survey findings in the form of charts, presented in the project's handbook product, called *Testing & Assessment: Adult Basic and Literacy Education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, are not readily conclusive, nor are findings clearly delineated in the final report. From the handbook charts it would appear that the standardized tests most commonly used in Pennsylvania at the time of the study were: TABE, ABLE, Woodcock-Johnson, and WRAT, for ABE students; Official GED Practice Test, for GED candidates; and Slosson SORT, for ESL students. Other tests in use were: BEST, Brigance, Cambridge Series, Contemporary Series, GED Test, Laubach Way & Challenger, LVA ESL Oral, LWR Checkups, Scott-Foresman Series, Steck-Vaughn Series, and teacher-made tests.

The handbook also describes types of standardized tests being used (norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, competency-based, curriculum-based) and survey respondents' ratings of the negative aspects of commonly used standardized tests. Findings of the literature review are scattered throughout.
Comments: While the handbook this project produced contains a great deal of valuable information, its layout and overall organization make it difficult to access. The typewritten booklet is arranged in sections rather than consecutively numbered pages, and the sequence of topics appears somewhat arbitrary. The final report contains scant text on the project's methodology, probably assuming that the full set of forms and letters used in the project and provided in the report adequately complete the picture. This documentation deficiency is unfortunate, since the project's important premise, extensive efforts, and useful findings are not described in a clear, accessible form.
Correlations/cross-references: References to and excerpts from related literature make the handbook, despite its weaknesses, an integral resource on the subject of assessment. The chart comparing standardized test instruments, by Dr. Meryl Lazar of the University of Pittsburgh, is particularly valuable. In 1993 it was updated by Dr. Lazar and reproduced for *Adult Learner Assessment: A Learning Packet*, written by Tana Reiff for the Tri-Valley Literacy Staff Development Center at Lehigh University.
Follow-up: The ABLE Bureau at the Pennsylvania Department of Education revised some of their information concerning testing and assessment as a result of this project's findings. Due to the large response to the handbook, a follow-up project was proposed; however, it was not funded.
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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Alternative Assessment Measures in Adult Basic Education Programs

Project #98-1048, DAEL #SA-302
Date: 1991
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
Purpose: To develop and implement a comprehensive assessment system (utilizing both standardized and alternative measures) in existing adult education programs; long range: to create guidelines for adult literacy providers for development of such an assessment system.
Procedure: Four ABE program sites, each with a different instructional focus, participated in the study. All participating students were given a standardized pre-test (a different one at each site) for screening. Then a link between instruction and assessment was established so that appropriate alternative assessments could be developed and implemented.

Program A's alternative methods were writing and reading-strategy worksheets. Program B, a GED preparation program, never fully developed its alternative measure. Program C used peer evaluation of writing. Program D, a secretarial training program, used some self-evaluation of written work and frequent instructor feedback, but little was documented, thus ongoing informal assessment was never fully implemented. Much of the work of this project focused on identifying and analyzing curricular goals and activities.
Summary of findings: "Although there is still work to be done in conceptualizing and training adult educators in the use of alternative assessment measures in their programs, it is a viable adjunct to the requisite standardized testing. Alternative measures will enable both students and instructors to know what the instructional program is accomplishing at any given time and to make adjustments as needed. Instructors can have a better sense of the knowledge the adults bring to the program and the gaps in knowledge the program can work to fill ... we need to develop a better understanding of how to better assess what adults bring to the instructional setting and what programs need to provide instructionally to make a difference. Well defined assessment programs offer the potential for assisting programs in making this difference."
Comments: More time than expected was spent on analysis of instruction. Less time than expected was spent on alternative assessment.

Due to high attrition and fluctuating attendance in the participating programs, full implementation of alternative assessment was difficult and post-testing was incomplete.
Correlations/cross-references: The body of literature on alternative assessment is growing, though, at this writing, much of it is more a survey of the literature than original research, and much of the research is inconclusive though promising. However, the following resources provide two of the better overviews, if slightly out of date: *Business Council for Effective Literacy Newsletter* (January 1990) and *Information Update: Special Issue on Alternative Assessment*. Literacy Assistance Center Newsletter (September 1989).
Follow-up: In 1993 Drs. Lazar and Bean produced "A Staff Development Model for Use of a Comprehensive Assessment System in Adult Literacy Programs." Also funded under Section 353 (PA Project #99-3009). That project found that instructors need to understand more about literacy learning and that "informal assessment can be integrated only when outcomes are clear to all." This involves three phases: 1) awareness of the theoretical elements of good literacy instruction, 2) development of meaningful instructional experiences supported by ongoing assessment, and 3) application of informal assessment in the program.
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PA State Literacy Resource Centers
or
DAEL Clearinghouse

For complete copy of the test measures, contact the University of Pittsburgh address above. Enclose $4.00 to cover copying and mailing.

Assessing Individuals with Learning Differences, Problems and Disabilities

PA Project #98-2024
Date: 1992
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Center for Alternative Learning, Bryn Mawr, PA
Purpose: To produce a screening instrument, simplified from an earlier version, which adult basic educators can use to identify learning problems; also to demonstrate the instrument to adult educators throughout Pennsylvania and develop a video to assist adult educators in using the instrument.
Procedure: The project director simplified an instrument he had developed earlier (the original document was not compared), into the "Cooper Screening of Information Processing." Described as something between a standardized test and a self-administered checklist, the instrument uses "an interview during which the screener asks questions about past performance and makes observations through samples of reading, writing and math to identify processing problems and academic skills." The instrument was then demonstrated (not field-tested) on 50 students in ten ABE programs throughout Pennsylvania.
Summary of findings: The project director developed "a learning-disabilities screening instrument ... useful in identifying processing difficulties." The instrument is easy to administer, but, as the report indicates, the screener needs to have an understanding of learning problems in adults in order to interpret results. The report recommends attending a workshop or viewing the videotape before administering the screening instrument.
Comments: An answer in the affirmative to many of the questions in the Cooper Screening of Information Processing would likely be derived from virtually anyone, not just learning-disabled adults. For example, questions such as *Do you talk too much?* or *Do you consider yourself a loner?* may characterize a person with a learning disability, but there is no apparent means here to draw such generalizations.

The screening relies a great deal on the subject's self-knowledge of cognitive processes. For example, it would appear to be difficult for anyone to provide an objective answer to the question *Do you have difficulty with grammar?*

On a broader scale, the screening asks more than a lay person is capable of answering. *Do any of your siblings have learning problems?* Can an adult student answer that question with a simple "yes" or "no"?

Many of the questions identify specific skills deficiencies (e.g. a tendency to write run-on sentences) but not learning disabilities per se.

There is no indication that the instrument was modified in any way after it was demonstrated on the 50 students in the field; therefore, the instrument was apparently not field-tested as such.

The strongest parts of the screening instrument are those, such as the handwriting analysis, that require the screener to actually observe performance, rather than simply ask oral questions. However, the report contains no guidelines for interpreting any of the answers, only a number of sample reports written by the developer. The accompanying video contains considerations for determining how answers should be recorded, along with an apparently useful summary sheet, but these provisions are absent from the project report.

The "external evaluator" was identified by name only; the report supplied no other information or credentials on this person. Further, there was no apparent basis for the evaluator's calling the project a success, only that the project met its goals. This may indeed be a valid instrument for screening learning disabilities in adults, but there is no data to support that conclusion.

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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Results of Field Research: ABE/ESL Assessment

DAEL #SA-225
Date: 1992
State: Washington
Contractor: Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, Portland, OR
Purpose: As stated in the final report, "to develop an assessment model for Washington State Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language programs." This included field research with adult learners, teachers, volunteers, and administrators.
Procedure: Research was conducted in three tiers: 1) interviews with eight "key players" representing a variety of ABE/ESL settings throughout the state; 2) focus-group discussions with students, teachers, and administrators on current assessment practices and issues; and 3) a questionnaire survey of "individuals representing various stakeholder groups (e.g. adult learners, teachers, volunteers, and administrators)" to provide "a broader base on attitudes, current practices, and needs regarding ABE/ESL assessment."
Summary of findings: The final report presents the findings of all three tiers of the study in detail, though it draws no cumulative conclusions. Some highlights:

The standardized tests most commonly used in Washington were the CASAS (the state's mandated instrument), TABE, and ABLE. Several others were mentioned as well. ESL students generally were taking either the BEST or the Washington State Adult Refugee Project tests. Tests were usually administered by nonprofessional staff.

Among the "key players" interviewed, the major issues or concerns regarding the tests were: 1) absence of a link between Washington's CORE competencies and CASAS; 2) lack of coordination between program sites and sponsoring agencies regarding assessment results and duplication; 3) ineffective assessment practices; 4) confusion about the ability of one instrument to serve several different purposes of assessment; 5) use of assessment information to judge teachers' performance; 6) test-administration issues: cost of tests, time required per learner, and ease of administration; 7) lack of local-program autonomy regarding assessment; 8) lack of follow-up counseling; 9) difficulty in assessing the ABE/ESL population, due to high mobility and attrition rates; and 10) "Pollyanna view" that alternative

assessment methods can successfully replace standardized testing.

When asked to describe desired assessment systems, key players cited the need for multiple measures, test user-friendliness, an exit component, and other factors. They also suggested greater integration of assessment with instruction in various ways.

Focus groups of ABE/ESL staff provided details on current practices in intake, placement, and diagnosis, concerns about assessment comparable to those offered by the "key players," and ideas for integrating assessment into classroom practice. Student focus groups indicated they appreciated tests for providing information on their progress.

The questionnaire survey provided a great deal of additional in-depth information on ABE and ESL assessment practices and areas for improvement.

Comments: The 1988 federal reporting mandate brought the issue of assessment into the spotlight. Though the study was conducted in one state, the final report contains a wealth of information on assessment issues that surely would be applicable to other states. As such, anyone interested in assessment would find the report worthy of reading in its entirety.

Correlations/cross-references: This project bears similarities to the Pennsylvania project "Adult Basic and Literacy Education Assessment Instruments Evaluation Handbook" (page 7). The Washington project provides much more detail on current practices and feelings about assessment but not as much hard data on specific instruments.

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DAEL Clearinghouse

Iowa's Adult Basic Education Programs: A Survey of Learner Demographics and Preliminary Skill Levels

Date: 1993

State: Iowa

Contractor: Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, San Diego, CA

Purpose: To provide baseline information about three target adult populations (special education, adult basic education, and English as a second language) enrolled in adult basic education programs in Iowa during the spring of 1993.

Procedure: Survey findings were based on a sampling of 495 adult basic education students participating in programs at 15 community colleges. The report states: "Although representative, the sampling conducted was not statistically random. However, the results are consistent with other studies of the same populations conducted over the past several years. Both demographic information and test results should be interpreted with some degree of caution."

Summary of findings: Among special-education students (all Caucasian, native English speakers), 43% could recognize certain words and phrases and 3% could read basic materials.

Nearly half of the ABE students were able to read at a "high school entry level" (CASAS score of over 231); however, math scores were significantly lower (CASAS score of below 214). Of those below high-school level, 3% percent of the sample scored at a level indicating great difficulty with everyday reading; 18% were able to read simple everyday materials, and 25% could read everyday materials but were not ready for high-school-level courses.

English as a second language students surveyed were Indochinese (mostly Vietnamese), Asian (from several countries), and Hispanic. Most scored within CASAS levels A and B in listening and within levels B and C in reading.

Comments: This study was essentially a broad administration of the CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) by the instrument's producers. Details of the six delineated CASAS levels is provided to assist with interpreting test scores. Demographic information on the survey participants is also provided. This is one of several accountability studies undertaken in Iowa.

Correlations/cross-references: The CASAS instrument is an assessment of functional-context literacy skills. This application of the test instrument produced a general picture of Iowa's ABE population. The use of CASAS is growing widely for use in assessing individual adult learners, often in workplace-literacy situations.

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Verifying Applied Literacy Skills in ABE Programs

PA Project #98-3043

Date: 1993

State: Pennsylvania

Contractor: Lehigh County Community College, Allentown, PA

Purpose: To 1) investigate the degree to which the ETS Tests of Applied Literacy Skills (TALS) may be used in predicting GED success, 2) obtain baseline data on applied skills of Allentown area adult students which can be compared to state (VALS) and national (NALS) literacy scores, 3) demonstrate greater learning gains and retention rates in the experimental group when compared to a traditional GED program, and 3) determine the level of post-program student success in meeting goals.

Procedure: Control and experimental groups were selected by recruiting 71 adult students enrolled in GED preparation classes at Lehigh County Community College, City Site. Based on the results of administering the Tests of Applied Literacy Skills (the ETS-designed instrument which was used to measure the document, prose, and quantitative literacy levels in the National Adult Literacy Survey), as well as the ABLE test, to all participants, the students were divided into two groups of roughly equivalent mixes of academic levels.

The control group was taught by one instructor using "a traditional ABE approach and materials," defined as instruction with an emphasis on vocabulary and comprehension (reading); spelling, grammar, usage on essay production (writing); and number operations on whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percents (mathematics); i.e. regular commercial GED preparation materials. With a different instructor as well as a counselor/instructor, the experimental group worked with "applied literacy skills," including study skills, word-processing applications with computers in conjunction with their essay writing, and the Simon & Schuster Applied Literacy Skills "real-life" materials for extra practice and homework. The experimental group also received periodic counseling (one time per month for 1.5

hours). Over six months, 100 instructional hours were completed.

Summary of findings: TALS Prose Literacy scores did not predict scores on the GED Practice Literature and the Arts subtests. There was a moderate correlation between the TALS Quantitative Test and the GED Practice Mathematics subtest, but the former should not be considered a strong predictor. On the other hand, if the learning goal is job training, then the TALS would be the appropriate instrument to use.

The experimental group showed no better retention rates than the control group, no better learning gains, and no greater goal accomplishment. In other words, "there were no major differences between the experimental and the control groups." Learning gains did occur in both groups, "but neither performed significantly better than the other."

Comments: The report concedes several points: 1) that the "small sample size may not have been sufficient to be confident of results," 2) that the project worked on the faulty assumption: "that preparation for the GED is equivalent to preparation for the world of work," and 3) that the variable of two different instructors may have confounded results.

This is, however, a thorough and well-written report of a generally well-designed project and should contribute to the growing body of research on the TALS. The final report documents the project exceptionally well. Every aspect and detail is presented clearly and in standard academic terminology and format, aside from several handwritten notes on the statistical pages. The project design, with modifications, would provide a model for correlating studies.

Correlations/cross-references: Correlations to the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) and Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Survey (PALS) were desired but impossible at the time of this project because neither study had yet released its final report.

Because NALS and PALS findings were unavailable, the project compared scores to those of the Department of Labor's 1990 study with unemployment and JTPA participants; LCCC's GED students' average scores were comparable to that study, though fewer LCCC students scored at the lowest levels.

Follow-up: Part of the study was a follow-up student survey. Half of the participants were interviewed by phone regarding what they were currently doing, career goals, reasons for wanting a GED, plans for taking the test, and feelings about various aspects of the class in which they had participated. Survey data was integral to the study's conclusions.

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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

SECTION TWO

Curriculum and Instruction

Do Dialogue Journals Increase the Writing Skills of Adult Students in One on One Literacy Instruction?

PA Project #98-0011
Date: 1990
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Allentown Literacy Council, Allentown, PA
Purpose: To investigate the effectiveness of training tutors to use dialogue journals with students in an adult literacy program by comparing the writing samples of student-tutor pairs using dialogue journals exclusively with pairs not using dialogue journals and to develop or adapt scoring procedures for dialogue journals that can be used with tutors.
Procedure: For the experimental group, 15 tutor-student pairs were trained and monitored in the use of dialogue journals. Student writing samples produced by this group (using dialogue journals exclusively) were compared to those of the control group's student writing, which was not in the form of dialogue journals. Nine pairs in each group completed the study.

Written samples were analyzed over five months for the number of words used, varied vocabulary, readability (using the Gunning Fog index), and number of errors. The first and last samples for each student were compared to determine whether increases or decreases had occurred in each of the variables. The two groups produced a total of 68 writing samples.
Summary of findings: Increases in written vocabulary were achieved by 89% of the control group and 67% of the experimental group. The control group used an average of 2.6 times more words in their last sample than in the first; the experimental group used 1.9 times more words. Seven of the nine control-group students showed increased readability levels, compared to two of the nine experimental-group students. Students using dialogue journals, however, wrote more often and with fewer errors.

A frequent comment of tutors and students in the experimental group was a desire to discuss errors and corrections, which was considered antithetical to the concept of dialogue journals.

The researchers concluded that the study was unable to determine whether dialogue journals improve writing ability. Several factors, such as the individuality and highly contextualized nature of dialogue journals, could not be taken into account in a study such as this one.
Comments: The final report describes four teaching implications as a result of this study; however, it is unclear how these conclusions were drawn based on the information produced by the study and provided in the report. For example, the statement "Dialogue journals should be incorporated into an overall writing program for adults ... but should not be used exclusively as the means to encourage writing" is not supported by study data. The listed implications are reasonable common-sense assumptions but not necessarily conclusions of this study.

Although the study is interesting, it is based on a tenuous premise: that use of dialogue journals has greater potential to improve writing than the use of traditional writing instruction—or any combination of techniques. Moreover, the study sample was very small.

The section describing the procedure for dialogue journal writing and the actual student-tutor samples are interesting and useful.
Correlations/cross-references: The final report refers to earlier studies concerning dialogue journal writing, particularly Peyton and Staton (1989), Rutledge (1988), Staton (1987), and Staton et al. (1983).
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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

An Examination and Evaluation of Large Computer Systems for Use in Adult Basic Education Programs

DAEL #SA-1102
Date: 1990
State: Washington
Contractor: Adult Basic Skills Consortium at the Washington State Adult Basic Education Center for Program & Staff Development
Purpose: Through several carefully designed survey instruments, to identify, examine, and describe five large computer-based integrated learning systems offering remediation of adult basic skills.
Procedure: A preliminary survey of ABE programs in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia identified which computer systems were in use and for what purposes. An Advisory Committee was formed to assist in developing an extensive evaluation document which was subsequently used in full-day on-site visits to selected programs using large computer-based instructional systems with adult students. (This instrument, as well as a checklist form of it, may be used by any program desiring an in-depth evaluation of computer systems.) The evaluation produced a series of general and specific issues for consideration in selecting an integrated learning system.

The five systems evaluated by this study were (with their publishers in parentheses): CCC (Computer Curriculum Corporation), CCP (Comprehensive Competencies Program), ClassWorks (Computer Networking Specialist), PLATO (The Roach Organization), and WICAT (WICAT Systems). Model installation sites were selected by publishers' representatives. Both students and staff were interviewed during the on-site visits.
Summary of findings: General issues examined produced the following conclusions: None of the integrated learning systems required experienced computer staff; however, one used a technical lab manager, all needed some clerical assistance, and in every case, a qualified instructor was the most important factor

in determining success or failure of a system. All systems required some degree of staff training. Systems needed to be housed in rooms large enough to accommodate the desired number of workstations and instructional materials, with adequate electrical service, ventilation, and security. All the systems were able to accommodate flexible student-attendance patterns. With the addition of software, student workstations could be utilized for other purposes, such as training in word processing or computer programming.

Specific issues examined produced the following information on each of the five systems: 1) brief description, 2) program where observed, 3) cost factors, 4) hardware configuration, 5) system quality, 6) the system's assumptions about learning, 7) instructional design, 8) built-in assessment and placement instruments, 9) instructional delivery, 10) feedback to students, 11) usability (user-friendliness), 12) modifiability, 13) management of student performance, 14) records management, 15) support/service, and 16) staff and student response.

The final report provides detailed data on all of the above criteria.

Comments: Narrative information on the five systems examined is comprehensive; however, even though the final report includes a "Summary Matrix" system comparison chart, the project attempted no qualitative comparison of systems. This is not necessarily a failure of the project, only a note that readers will not see bottom-line quality ratings as they might in some hardware or software reviews. Nevertheless, this report, and/or applying the long or short evaluation instruments to other, newer systems, would provide a great deal of useful information to any program considering purchase of an integrated learning system.

Follow-up: Newer systems are now available.

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A Research Study of the 1988/89 Project Workplace Literacy's Effect on Worker Productivity

Project #98-0017
Date: 1990
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Central Intermediate Unit #10 Development Center for Adults, Lock Haven, PA
Purpose: To evaluate improvement in reading, writing, mathematics, and basic computer literacy proficiency levels and to identify changes in worker productivity, efficiency, and morale of employees who had participated in the previous year's workplace literacy project.
Procedure: Managers, supervisors, and workers at a Champion plant who had participated in a Statistical Process Control (SPC) and computer literacy program were surveyed and productivity statistics were compared to those derived from a control group of workers at a nonparticipating plant. A separate management survey was developed, disseminated, collected, and analyzed. A limited number of employees cooperated with the study because, according to the personnel office, union members were reluctant to record any responses that might contribute in any way to a positive image of plant management. Therefore, the researchers contacted the workers by phone after hours to explain their independence from plant management. This effort elicited responses from 57 of the 97 workers (17 no longer worked for the company).
Summary of findings: Of the 97 participants tested, 95 met or exceeded the level considered mastery of the reading and math concepts taught, indicating an average improvement of 2.5 grade levels.

In the computer literacy proficiency assessment, workers who had participated in the previous year's program scored an average of 8.9 out of 10 questions. The control group scored an average of 8.5 out of 10. This was considered an insignificant difference.

Survey results indicated that employees who had participated in the SPC program had a significantly better understanding of how their jobs fit into the company as a whole and how the production process could be improved and were more confident of their ability to handle new challenges than the control group. As derived from a separate survey, management productivity was increased due to a decrease in production line errors.

Assessment of moral was "impossible given the ongoing labor dispute."
Comments: The study was undertaken in the midst of considerable labor unrest. The report cautions that employee responses were certainly colored by that atmosphere and that study results must be interpreted with this in mind.
Correlations/cross-references: The project on which this study was based is called "Workplace Literacy for Clinton County," PA project #98-9023, FY1989.
For copy of full report:
PA State Literacy Resource Centers

A Study of CAI/CAV Laser Disk Technology in the Adult Classroom

PA Project #98-0052
Date: 1990
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Altoona Area School District, Altoona, PA
Purpose: To compare the results of a computer-assisted interactive laser disk program (IBM) with a computer-assisted non laser disk program (Apple) in teaching mathematics in adult basic education. Evaluating cost effectiveness of the laser-disk delivery system was also an objective.
Procedure: One group of 50 adult students utilized the ISC interactive laser disk program, developed in conjunction with Millersville University. Running on an IBM Info-Window system, the program "provides both visual and auditory response when presenting an explanation and/or responding to a correct/incorrect response by the student." A second group of 25 students used the Skills Bank GED Series, a typical computer-assisted instructional program. Both groups also used MECC software on Apple II GS computers for drill and practice. A third group of 21 students received math instruction involving no computers at all. To avoid the "Hawthorne effect," all students utilized both computer systems for English, career-exploration, and reading instruction.

Due to several major problems beyond the control of the project itself, the project was not fully carried out.
Summary of findings: Students using both the laser-disk and traditional CAI systems for math instruction produced significantly greater learning gains than the group using no CAI. Comparison of pre- and post-test data, as well as student and staff responses, supported the administrative decision to purchase the

interactive laser disk equipment, though it was considerably more expensive than the Apple II system. That conclusion was based on a combination of subjective and objective factors: exit interviews, test data, and program observations showed that the majority of teachers and students clearly preferred the interactive laser-disk system because they found it more stimulating to use.

Comments: One of the problems encountered in this study echoes that of many other studies of ABE students, that because they are highly transient, not enough participants remain for the duration of the study.

Bureaucratic problems, including project approval halfway through the fiscal year, an unrelated school district political situation, and the unannounced withdrawal of the project consultant, a doctoral candidate from Penn State, illustrate how ABE research can be jeopardized by administrative forces beyond the project itself.

Correlations/cross-references: This project was conceived on the premise that CAI produces greater learning gains and good cost-effectiveness as outlined in a 1987 Section 310 project, "Computers and Software: A Utilization Survey."

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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Auditory Aspects of Reading/Writing Instruction

PA Project #98-2009
Date: 1992
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Delaware County Literacy Council
Purpose: To teach adult literacy students through an auditory approach to reading and writing instruction and to evaluate their progress against that made by students taught by traditional visual methods.

Procedure: A certified audiologist was retained to train tutors in auditory teaching approaches. Student-participants in the study were solicited from among new enrollees and divided into a control group of eight students (visual) and an experimental group of nine (auditory). (This was not group learning; each student had an individual tutor.) Students were pretested at intake, and the project intended to retest at subsequent intervals of 10, 20, and 30 hours of instruction to compare reading gains in the two groups.

The project was severely impaired by the illness of the audiologist's mother, for whom the audiologist was the primary caregiver. Subsequently, three sessions for training tutors in the auditory method did not begin until January of the project year, allowing inadequate time for actual tutoring in the two methods.

Also, three students in the experimental group expressed discomfort with the absence of textbooks and withdrew from the study.

Summary of findings: Despite the critical limitations of the project, there were some potentially significant findings (though this project was unable to verify them). Post-testing revealed slightly higher reading gains in the control group; however, five individual gains (out of nine participants) in the experimental group were achieved in less time than in the control group. Also, students in the control group "logged more hours in a more consistent manner."

This is a project that may have raised more questions than it answered. For example, the final report notes a possible connection between each group's "immediate response to the techniques and subsequent success. Could this indicate a 'marriage' of learning modality or is it a reflection of attitude?" Also, did students in the control group perform better because they felt more comfortable with the traditional approach?

Comments: Several observations may contribute to future projects comparing auditory and visual approaches to teaching adult reading—a potentially worthwhile exercise.

First, the design of this study may have been flawed. Perhaps, had students first been tested for learning-modality preferences, the study might, more validly, have compared gains in two groups of auditory learners. Without any indication of modality preference, a study using this one's basic design could feasibly be comparing a control group of auditory learners being taught through visual methods to an experimental group of visual learners being taught through auditory methods, which would produce nothing more than a learner-to-method mismatch.

A second design flaw may be that any approach to teaching reading that does not encompass both visual and auditory learning may be inherently doomed to lower success rates.

Finally, the grantee may have been able to follow through as planned if a replacement audiologist could have been brought into the project early on.

The final report contains numerous auditory activities that would be useful in any literacy program. These alone are worth a look.

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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Discovery Learning Project

Project #98-2058
Date: 1992
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Fayette County Community Action Agency, Inc.
Purpose: To evaluate the effectiveness of the LVA "focal model" by comparing reading gains in two groups of adult students using the LVA collaborative discovery method of literacy instruction and "focal points" with two groups using the same method but without focal points, and in comparing the LVA groups to one group using the standard Laubach method.

Procedure: The Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) focal model refers to an instructional system using LVA methods and materials in conjunction with studying a life-skills topic of critical interest to the adult students in a particular group.

In this project, tutors attended five hours of training (in two sessions) on the use of LVA materials and methods in small-group tutoring situations; this was a departure from the one-on-one tutoring to which they were accustomed. The agency then recruited four small groups of students (two to nine each), with an average reading level of 4.5. Students were pre- and post-tested using the WRAT. Each group met from eight to 16 times. Two of the groups focused on the topics of parenting, budgeting, and life skills while involved with collaborative LVA instruction. This involved discussing the topic, then responding to it through reading, speaking, and writing, including rewriting, editing, and group assessment. Students

were encouraged to tackle life tasks by breaking them into steps, formulating strategies, testing and refining strategies, and completing the task. The other two groups used collaborative LVA only, without focal topics. The Laubach group continued using Laubach Literacy materials. Attendance of all groups was monitored.

Summary of findings: The two collaborative LVA groups with focal points scored reading gains of 1.25 and 1, respectively. The two non-focal groups scored gains of 1.5 and .75. These differences are considered negligible. However, while attendance in the focal groups was 62% and 61%, attendance in the non-focal groups was 88% and 79% and group interaction was better and personal attitudes more positive in the non-focal groups. The non-focal group with the least reading gains did not have individual tutors.

The project's final report surmises some reasons for the more negative attitudes of the focal groups. One of the groups, comprised of senior citizens, was reluctant to share private experiences, though they competed for the tutor's attention to the "best life experiences." The result was a tense atmosphere. The other focal group, comprised of persons who had experienced spousal abuse, exhibited greater differences in educational and economic backgrounds than anticipated.

"Confounding factors," such as learning disabilities, in the Laubach group, "prohibited this group from serving as a suitable control group." Therefore, "the study did not prove a correlation between accelerated learning and focal groups."

Another factor contributing to negative feelings in the focal groups was the tutors' discomfort with a collaborative environment in which they were required to expose their own personal issues. Some felt this "was reminiscent of a support group rather than an "academic group striving to achieve."

Comments: This project took on the ambitious and fascinating task of comparing adult reading instructional methods. However, they did so on an insufficiently low budget (total project budget was only $4,500) and immediately encountered the difficulty of forming adequately comparable groups of adult reading students. The virtually equivalent reading gains between the focal and non-focal groups, the continuing presence of individual tutors in one group, and the attitudinal differences—mostly attributable to extracurricular variables—produced inconclusive results to a worthwhile exercise. However, a possibly inadvertent finding of the project, disregarding the influence of group composition, was that the non-focal groups exhibited a more positive attitude toward the learning situation than the focal groups, who were required to share personal feelings.

Correlations/cross-references: Little research has been done to compare reading gains in adults using various instructional methods. This is one study in that direction, and though inconclusive, it illustrates the need for further work in this area, as well as the inherent difficulties of conducting such studies.

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For copy of full report:

PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Exploring the Comprehension Skills and Strategies of ABE Students

PA Project #98-2003, ERIC #ED352527

Date: 1992

State: Pennsylvania

Contractor: Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Penn State University

Purpose: To research the comprehension skills and strategies of ABE students as a first step in comparing them to proficient readers in developing instructional methods.

Procedure: A questionnaire modeled on those used in earlier, comparable research projects (mostly with children) and sample reading passages were used to interview 55 ABE students, reading at levels 5-9, at two sites (Altoona and State College). Students were asked questions regarding: 1) what they know about reading comprehension, themselves as comprehenders, and comprehension strategies (what makes someone a good reader?), 2) their ability to detect comprehension failure while reading, and 3) what, if any, strategies they use at these failure points. Three versions of each selected reading passage were presented: one in normal form, one with a sentence in scrambled word order, and one containing a contradictory sentence. Answers to the three open-ended interview questions, as well a read-aloud sample, were tape-recorded. The other answers were recorded on paper.

Summary of findings: The majority of responses to the first open-ended question, "What do you think makes someone a really good reader?", fell into three categories: practice, 53%; understanding what is read, 34%; and liking what is read (motivation), 16%.

On the second open-ended question, "If I gave you something to read right now, how would know if you were reading it well?", 45% fell into one category: global understanding, while 17% said they wouldn't know if they were reading well.

The third open-ended question, "What do you think makes something difficult to read?", allowed multiple responses, and 63% of responses were in the "reader/text interaction: word level" category: that difficult words would make a passage difficult to read. Another 40% of responses fell into the "reader/text interaction: text-level" category: that texts that didn't interest them or about which they had no prior knowledge would be difficult. And 32% of responses fell into the "text" category: that factors such as small print or poor organization would make something difficult to read.

In the second part of the questionnaire, regarding comprehension strategies, about one-third of responses indicated "an appreciation of the importance of comprehension and a knowledge of sound comprehension strategies."

In the part of the study on detecting scrambled or contradictory sentences, 66% were able to detect scrambled sentences, but only 35% detected the contradictory sentences. No one detected the problems without first being questioned about them. The one-third who detected problems also used strategies to deal with them. However, most of the ABE students disregarded the problems even if they noticed them.

Comments: All reading passages, questionnaires, and survey coding information are provided in appendices. These, along with a detailed description of the project's thorough methodology, make this a comprehensive report of a serious research project. Findings presented in chart form would be easier to access than gleaning them from the text.

Correlations/cross-references: A significant body of research exists on readers' metacognition (knowledge of one's own cognition, particularly with regard to the reading process), of which this

project and its director's 1988 doctoral dissertation are part. This report refers to three related papers: Myers and Paris (1978), Gambrell and Heathington (1981), and Garner and Kraus (1981-82). Several others, including Boraks and Schumacher (1981) and Meyer and Keefe (1988), also correlate the general finding that poor readers tend to view reading more as a process of naming words than of seeking meaning. This Penn State study did find slightly higher metacognition levels than other studies, but the adults were reading at somewhat higher reading levels than in other studies involving ABE students.

Helping adult beginning readers focus on meaning and develop comprehension strategies is the major thrust of whole-language instruction. This Penn State study contributes to a growing body of research in this area, though this study steps beyond its predecessors by concentrating on the reading practices, comprehension strategies, and motivations of adult students in particular.

A summary of this project by its director, along with a bibliography of metacognition and comprehension studies, appears in *Mosaic: Research Notes on Literacy, February 1993, Vol. 3, No. 1*, the newsletter of Penn State's Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy.

Follow-up: At this writing, Dr. Forlizzi is developing ideas for follow-up study but has not yet completed a proposal or follow-up study. She has expressed her willingness to be contacted by persons interested in this study.

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For copy of full report:

PA State Literacy Resource Centers
or ERIC
or Study monograph available from: ISAL (address above). Cost: $27.00

High-Tech for Effective ESL/Family Literacy Instruction

PA Project #98-9010, ERIC ED #356683
Date: 1992
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA
Purpose: To study educational effectiveness of CD-ROM-based computer-assisted instruction in ESL and Family Literacy curriculum, specifically in the area of language acquisition, as well as for retention/attendance and staff development, and as a showcase for CD-ROM applications in adult education.
Procedure: Thirty beginning/higher beginning ESL/family literacy students at the Indochinese-American Council's Community Service Center of Drexel University, Philadelphia, were divided into one control group and two experimental groups (based on level). All participants were pre-tested. All spent one hour per week in a regular ESL class and another hour reading children's literacy materials. Both groups used print materials, but the experimental group also used Proficiency and Discis software on CD-ROM on Apple Macintosh Plus computers. After completing the instructional packages, students were post-tested and exit-interviewed.
Summary of findings: Based on comparisons of pre- and post-test scores, the experimental adult LEP groups, who had used the computer-aided instruction along with print-based instruction, experienced greater mean gains than the control group, which had used only print-based materials. Attendance/retention rates were higher in the experimental group as well. Exit interviews indicated that enthusiasm was also higher in the experimental group. However, for CAI to significantly enhance learning in an ESL/family literacy program, a great deal of human interaction is necessary.
Comments: The report acknowledges a difficulty in forming ethnically equivalent control and experimental groups (one was mostly Cambodians, the other a mixture of Vietnamese and Chinese).

There is a virtually no other research on CD-ROM-based CAI in ESL and family literacy; therefore, this project is "just a beginning."

The project experienced software problems: the version of Proficiency software used was not completely stable or reliable, and the Discis software was not appropriate for adult learners. However, the program reported having had good, readily available technical support.

The ESL curriculum as presented in this study was not holistic.
Correlations/cross-references: This study reinforced conclusions of numerous other studies (Balson et al., 1985-86; Terrell, 1990; Fletcher, 1990; see footnotes in report) which have indicated that, in general, CAI helps students learn more and perform better than when using conventional classroom methods alone.
Follow-up: Drexel University and the Mayor's Commission on Literacy conduct an annual Computers and Adult Literacy Conference each May.
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Small Group ABE/DHHR Tutoring Project

Date: 1992
State: West Virginia
Contractor: Mason County Literacy Council, Inc., Lakin, WV
Purpose: "To demonstrate the effectiveness of small group tutoring in preparation for entering the ABE program [using space for two groups provided by the county office of the Department of Health and Human Resources, Work and Training Division] ... One group is instructed using the collaborative approach; the other uses a standard structured approach. Both use daily living materials in addition to more standard curriculum."
Procedure: It is unclear whether the project's stated purpose is to compare the "collaborative" and "structured" groups or to evaluate small-group tutoring in general. Either way, the program appears to have been carried out less than methodically. Neither the terms *collaborative* nor *structured* are ever defined; the implication is that *collaborative* refers to a whole-language approach and *structured* to a Laubach-type phonics approach. No useful details of program implementation are provided. The final report lists only a few notes on securing instructional materials, assisting adult students with transportation and flexible scheduling, and simply being prepared to work with students' children "on some level."
Summary of findings: Project "findings" have little relation to project objectives. There are some anecdotal notes on group composition. One statement provides some comparison between the "collaborative" and "structured" approaches: "An unstructured program [the collaborative group?] made these students uncomfortable and they were unable to perform in such a lesson." On

the other hand, a later statement indicts the "structured" approach as well: "Members of the structured group were easily intimidated by introduction of new materials and methods." One statement addresses group learning in general, favoring neither approach to reading instruction: "The group dynamics were supportive of the learning process and enhanced skills acquired. The informality and lack of tension in this [which?] small group setting contributed to the students' being at ease with the materials in use." The final report also notes an erratic attendance pattern.

Comments: It is unclear what this project actually set out to accomplish. The final report is very sketchy, with little information on how the project carried out its objectives (unfocused though they were) and with no evaluation data whatsoever, other than brief progress notes on four individual students. It appears that the project was less of a demonstration or experiment than a way to fund a new tutoring program at a new site.

Correlations/cross-references: This is another attempt, ostensibly at least, to compare instructional approaches. If nothing else, this project does point out some of the difficulties of conducting longitudinal studies of adult learning in the context of a real setting. Attendance problems, logistics, and group dynamics, not to mention the project developers' lack of focus and an absence of true control variables, result in no reliable conclusions. Any project comparing instructional approaches must consider mechanisms for encountering such predictable factors.

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Software Evaluation and Manual for Kentucky Adult Education Programs

Date: 1992
State: Kentucky
Contractor: Longfellow Adult Learning Center, Owensboro, KY
Purpose: To evaluate at least 150 software programs for consideration to be used in Kentucky Adult Learning Centers.
Procedure: A standard evaluation form was designed and used to evaluate 174 software programs in the following areas: Subject and Content, Cost, hardware Requirements, Installation, Degree of Student Independence, Record-Keeping and Assessment features, Correlation to Standardized Tests, and Technical Support. Findings were organized and compiled into a *Software Evaluation Manual.*
Summary of findings: The 174 software packages which were evaluated were found to be of varying usefulness for adult learners. Details are available in the *Software Evaluation Manual* which this project produced. In addition, two staff development workshops were conducted to introduce adult educators to the method for evaluating software.
Comments: The manual was not available to review for this summary.
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Effectiveness of Group Instruction in Adult Literacy Acquisition

PA Project #98-3034
Date: 1993
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Purpose: To contrast the reading-level gains and personal goals accomplishment of adult students taught in collaborative learning groups with those in one-to-one tutoring situations.
Procedure: Led by consultant Daniel Hibbs Morrow, Ph.D., 20 adult students were placed in three small groups and 11 with individual tutors. All students were both exposed to a learner-generated curriculum. All were pre- and post-tested with the reading comprehension subscale of the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE) and the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT) of word recognition. Information about personal goals accomplishment was collected from the annual Pennsylvania Department of Education student data forms and this literacy council's intake interview and follow-up forms.
Summary of findings: Students in one-to-one instruction scored significantly higher post-test gains than group-instruction students, though "magnitudes of gain were not significantly different from one another."

A number of correlations between test scores and student demographics were also obtained. Among them, there was a "negative correlation between rate of reading comprehension gain and years of formal schooling" and a "positive correlation between gain and age." This was offered as a possible explanation for the greater gains by the one-to-one students, since they were generally older and had completed fewer years of formal schooling.

Neither group reported accomplishing their goals, but one-to-one students reported a higher proportion of goal accomplishment than the group-instruction students.

Comments: The authors concede the possibility that the one-to-one learning environment may be more conducive to both goal setting and reporting of goal accomplishment due to the personal relationship established between student and tutor.

The report is professionally written and provides clear graphs and charts.

Correlations/cross-references: The report would be more useful had it cited related literature and provided more background on the reasons for conducting this study. As written, however, it provides a useful model for replication.

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Reading Together (Toward a Collaborative Approach to Parent Involvement: The Implications of Parents' Beliefs)

PA Project #98-3029
Date: 1993
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
Purpose/background: While most existing approaches to involving parents in the educational process assume that parents' existing skills need to be replaced by "more desirable" values, newer approaches encourage a more reciprocal arrangement. However, col-

laborative approaches to parent involvement tend to assume that all members of a cultural group represent a common value system. This study sought to elicit young African American mothers' beliefs about learning and literacy and to identify their shared goals in an effort to create a collaborative approach to parent involvement in an early-intervention program.

Procedure: Rather than administer standardized inventories to collect parents' beliefs, the project chose an open-ended, peer-discussion format. A series of discussions was held with 19 single, African American mothers, all on welfare, aged 17 to 22, with one to three children, aged two months to 6 years. Nine of the women were enrolled in an adult basic education program and ten in a GED program, with their children in an affiliated day-care program. Five discussion groups met several times, totaling ten hours each. Discussions were tape-recorded for later analysis.

Summary of findings: The mothers in this group "did not share a common world view." Their beliefs about learning and literacy "reflected several different child-development perspectives, broadly defined along a continuum of transmission, maturational, and transactional beliefs." Therefore, any assumption that intergroup differences represent a "homogeneity of experiences for families within a particular culture" is "unwarranted."

This study did, however, indicate shared goals among the women: 1) the desire that their children thrive both socially and intellectually, 2) that the school provide a safe environment, 3) the belief that a good teacher is one who maintains respect, and 4) the desire to be positive role models to their children and to attain the skills to be so. Where the women differed was in the methods they preferred for attaining these common goals. Nevertheless, all of the goals are highly compatible with those of the school.

The findings were applied to parent-involvement collaboration in the children's day-care program to make it more congruent with parents' beliefs. For example, two literacy-based play settings (a kitchen and a library with low shelves) were introduced, and the children's day was restructured to include at least 15 minutes of storybook reading, 15 minutes of a goal-structured learning activity, and a free-play period in the literacy-related settings.

In addition, the parent-education classes were restructured to include regular involvement in the day-care program.

Comments: The final report provides much more detail of parents' responses and applications to the program. Though the report does not provide statistical reporting of all responses, a concise and potentially useful table does summarize well the continuum of perspectives the mothers expressed.

Correlations/cross-references: The researchers' thorough search of the literature produced an extensive bibliography of related studies, several of which this study succeeded in disproving.

It would appear that this study should be essential reading for anyone involved in a program of parent-school collaboration, and it would not be surprising to see it emerge as an important contribution to the literature on this subject.

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Technological Solutions for Homebound Adult Learners

Date: 1993

State: West Virginia

Contractor: James Rumsey Technical Institute and The Total Learning Research Institute, Martinsburg, WV

Purpose: To conduct a national search for effective, technology-based methods for assisting homebound adult basic education students in rural areas. This included searching the literature, designing a technology-based approach for local implementation, and developing a local pilot.

Procedure: The study team identified existing computer-based, interactive services for homebound ABE students. They then developed a set of criteria for determining applicability of the technology to West Virginia ABE and surveyed ABE providers in the state (61% response rate) to seek information and opinions on home interactive learning. The team identified ABE providers interested in piloting such systems and federal funding sources to do so, but, due to cost limitations, did not actually conduct a pilot study.

Summary of findings: The study reached six main conclusions: 1) Several technology-based instructional options are currently available for homebound adult learners: in-home computing using approved courseware, take-home computer programs, telephone transmission of computer-assisted instruction, video on demand (future), multimedia broadcast networks (future), and electronic bulletin-board services (in limited use nationally: HOMER from IMSATT, PLATO 200 from TRO Learning, and, NovaNET, which was deemed most appropriate to the West Virginia clientele). Most of these options would require each homebound student to have a computer and a modem. 2) Current technology-based options fail at least one criterion for cost-effective implementation, that at the time of the study NovaNET was not available on a dial-up basis and so would require considerable start-up expense to develop an infrastructure to support the system. 3) Emerging technologies do offer significant promise for widespread cost-effective implementation, through several new multimedia interactive networks that will soon be available directly to the home. 4) ABE providers in West Virginia are interested in offering technology-based curricula for homebound adult learners; though a majority of survey respondents did not currently offer homebound instruction, a greater number were interested in being pilot sites for an interactive computer-assisted program. 5) Federal (e.g. Department of Defense) and foundation (e.g. Kenan Trust) grants are available for applying interactive technology to home use. 6) Offering widespread technology-based programs to homebound ABE students in West Virginia would be premature at this time due to high start-up costs; however, imminent availability of NovaNET through the online service CompuServe would alter this conclusion.

Comments: The study team appears to have conducted a comprehensive review of existing applications of computer-based instruction for homebound ABE students. The project's clear, well-written final report would be a valuable resource for anyone investigating distance-education solutions.

Correlations/cross-references: The final report lists several programs throughout the U.S. which have tried or are currently using NovaNET and other technology-based networks and programs for homebound students at all levels.

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Visual Literacy: A Neglected Component

PA Project #98-3007
Date: 1993
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Penn State University
Purpose: To 1) adapt an existing, visually oriented educational model for use with adults, 2) develop a curriculum-based assessment to analyze the model, 3) train ABLE instructors in use of the program, 4) implement and evaluate the project, 5) disseminate projects findings.
Procedure: A GED teacher and a life-skills teacher at Tuscarora Intermediate Unit Adult Education and Training Center in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, were trained to implement a program emphasizing visual literacy to 27 students. Materials included the novel *The Black Pearl*, by Scott O'Dell; a film adaptation of the novel, called *The Sacred Cave*; poster-sized prints of scenes from the movie; and an audiocassette of the movie soundtrack. Activities involved learners in reading, writing, discussion, and mathematics. The model carried students through four steps: visualizing, inquiring, reading, and applying. Ten students were pre- and post-tested, using an instrument developed in this project, on general vocabulary, Spanish vocabulary, general knowledge, and attitudes.
Summary of findings: "Students showed gains in knowledge of general vocabulary and Spanish vocabulary from the beginning to the end of the project. There was some indication that students held a more positive attitude toward fiction at the end of the project. Teachers and students felt that the materials and activities aided comprehension and thinking skills development. Both teachers and students were enthusiastic about the program."
Comments: As the project's abstract notes, the findings should be verified comparing an experimental group with a control group.
Correlations/cross-references: The project was developed in response to research by Mallery and Swimmer (1992) to build activities that fit "... the learning styles, content backgrounds, and skill levels of a specific target audience" and writers such as Kazemek (1992) who "have called for an increased focus on developing literacy for personal growth and enjoyment."
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The Year in Review, Volume 2: 1992-1993, Reports of Research Conducted by Adult Education Practitioner-Researchers From Virginia

Date: 1993
State: Virginia
Contractor: Virginia Adult Educators Research Network
Purpose: The general goal was to report on practitioner research projects on five topics, conducted in local programs in Virginia. The purposes of each of the projects reported on were: 1) To explore better ways to link class activities to learner lives and learning. 2) To study factors related to student retention in adult education. (This was done at three different sites.) 3) To investigate the reasons well-prepared students delay taking the GED test. 4) To survey adult education teachers who had conducted collaborative action research about changes experienced as a result. 5) To examine the use of calculators in mathematics education.
Methodology: The Virginia Adult Educators Research Network assisted in coordinating the five action research projects. Each researcher or team of researchers prepared a report of their activities, including an introduction, a literature review, a description of methods used, findings, and suggestions for further research.
Summary of findings: The findings of each project, very briefly and incompletely stated, were as follows:

1. The 15 adult learners participated in an average of 12.9 outside-of-class learning activities. While a pre-test survey indicated that none was satisfied with their level of outside-of-class activity, the post survey indicated that 35% were now satisfied.
2. Two focal points of the study—the relationships to retention of student responsibility for learning and the phenomenon of bonding in the classroom—both showed promising avenues for deeper inquiry. Overall, findings were anecdotal and no solid conclusions could be drawn. The study noted that individual programs should not assume to know the causes of retention difficulties but to conduct specific local research.
3. Fear of both failure (e.g. test anxiety) and success (e.g. reluctance to stop attending well-liked classes) were the dominant reason for learners' delaying taking the GED.
4. Overall, teachers viewed their collaborative action-research experiences positively, but their concerns were: uncertainty of the process, lack of resources, large quantity of time and work involved, difficulty of writing, and lack of support.
5. This was a literature review with no study conclusions but a great deal of information on the history and use of calculators in math instruction.

Comments: The publication briefly described here presents an excellent model for coordination and reporting of practitioner action research.
Correlations/cross-references: The Virginia Adult Educators Research Network has also produced *The Adult Educator's Guide to Practitioner Research* ($5.00) and other publications for potential action researchers.
Follow-up: The Network plans to continue and expand, including communicating and coordinating with other research institutions.
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SECTION THREE

Participation and Retention

Strategies for Success: A Study on ABE Student Retention

ERIC #ED290952
Date: 1987 (included here because of relation to other retention studies)
State: North Carolina
Contractor: Coastal Carolina Community College, Jacksonville, NC
Purpose: To learn why adult basic education students drop out and what programs can do to keep them attending and learning.
Procedure: Printed survey forms asking about interferences with attendance and feelings about ABE classes were distributed to former students who had dropped out of North Carolina ABE programs, current students, ABE instructors, and ABE directors between the fall of 1985 and the winter of 1987. The number of forms returned was 158 from the non-continuing students, 199 from current students, 13 from ABE instructors, and 41 from ABE directors.
Summary of findings: The top problems affecting ABE student attendance were identified as: transportation, child care, conflicts with working hours, family, and financial.

A variety of implications for improving adult student retention were drawn from the survey findings:

1. Student contact is an integral part of ABE retention efforts.
2. The rate of no-shows can be decreased through individual contacts.
3. A more flexible schedule is beneficial to ABE students.
4. Retention strategies can be effectively employed to decrease the dropout rate of ABE students.

Other implications from the findings address quality of instruction, suitable program structures, and effectiveness of support services.
Comments: Implications are drawn from the survey, not from modified program practices.

There may be an inherent flaw in using a print document to survey adult student dropouts who may be poor readers.
Correlations/cross-references: Several other studies on student retention are profiled in this section. In comparison to those later studies, this one appears somewhat superficial but it probably helped to lay groundwork for subsequent studies.
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Designing Delivery Systems for Adult Education in Rural Areas

PA Project #98-9015
Date: 1989
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Mansfield University, Mansfield, PA
Purpose: To identify effective instructional strategies for target rural ABE and GED populations, specifically to identify existing delivery systems, rural adults' and ABE/GED teachers' preferred delivery systems and referral-agency contacts, and to provide a survey instrument and research design that could be replicated in other rural counties.
Procedure: Subjects were selected from state-funded ABE/GED programs in 23 rural Pennsylvania counties. Separate surveys were designed and mailed to teachers, tutors, program administrators, and students. Returned surveys were coded by county, percentage of responses was tabulated for each item, and data was analyzed to determine preferred delivery systems.
Summary of findings: A substantial data set led to the conclusions that: 1) transportation or transportation subsidies and child-care provisions should be made to maximize participation, 2) public buildings are the preferred instructional settings, 3) evening classes or tutorials are preferred by more students but many preferred morning and afternoon classes, 4) Monday through Thursday are preferred class days, and 5) classes should meet two times per week for 2.5-3 hours (employed students preferred shorter classes). Teachers, tutors, and students agreed that providing telephone conferences would improve participation. Teachers and tutors felt that more combinations of regular classroom instruction and one-to-one tutoring should be offered; employed students agreed, but unemployed students preferred more one-to-one tutoring. All groups liked the idea of videotapes for home instruction, though more teachers, tutors, and referral-agency personnel than students liked the idea of lessons via public television. All groups liked the idea of computer and correspondence lessons at home.
Comments: This study appears to provide a useful model for rural programs seeking to assess preferred instructional delivery systems in their own areas.
Correlations/cross-references: A brief literature review and bibliography provide a context for this project's purposes and methodology.
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Reasons for Nonparticipation Among Iowa Adults Who Are Eligible for ABE

ERIC #ED290048
Date: 1989
State: Iowa
Contractor: Western Iowa Tech Community College
Purpose: While many recruitment-related studies focus on why people choose to attend adult basic education classes, this study sought to discover reasons why Iowa adults who are eligible for ABE do *not* attend. It was the third in a series of studies conducted under Section 310 (now 353) grants in Iowa defining the ABE target population to assist in planning and policy formulation.
Procedure: The study, conducted by Hal Beder of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, was based on the premise

that the potential ABE population is not a single homogeneous group but rather is comprised of many subgroups, each with different attitudes toward ABE. A screener survey was sent to 9,000 Iowa adults, randomly drawn from a database of households in the state, to locate persons 18 years of age or older without high school diplomas who had never attended ABE classes. Of the 1,321 surveys completed, 175 were from persons eligible and willing to participate in the study. From an average of 3.7 phone-call attempts per person, 129 persons were interviewed by phone with 52 demographic and attitudinal questions.

Earlier studies had estimated that ABE was serving only 3% of its target population nationwide and that 53% of those people were under age 50. Therefore, since the Iowa random sample turned out to be mostly persons over 50 (many of whom had dropped out of school during the Depression to work), an Expanded Sample was added to better represent the actual, younger ABE market. Results of the Basic Sample and Expanded (combined) Sample were reported separately. Also, relationships between age and socioeconomic variables were analyzed.

Summary of findings: The six highest-scoring reasons for not returning to school, of the 32 offered in the survey, were: 1) I would feel strange going back to school, 2) There aren't many people in adult high school classes who are my age, 3) Going back to school would be like going to high school all over again, 4) I am too old to go back to school, 5) I don't know anything about adult high school classes, and 6) A high school diploma wouldn't improve my life. The researchers summarize that five of the six reasons indicate an attitude among nonparticipants that they simply do not belong in school.

Overall, "Persons ... fail to participate for four basic reasons: Low Perceptions of Need, Perceived Difficulty, Situational Barriers [child care, transportation, etc.], and Dislike for School. With the exception of Situational Barriers, each deals primarily with perceptions about what ABE is like and how it might benefit the individual."

The implication is that ABE advertising would do well to project an image of a warm, caring place for adults to come for education.

Another interesting conclusion of this study is that, while ABE exists to produce a more literate society, people attend or don't attend adult school for very individual, not social, reasons. If we consider the number of adults who attend ABE programs in proportion to the number who perceive a need for ABE, then the percentage of the target population being served is much greater than broad studies have estimated.

Comments: This study appears to have been conducted using sound, standard research procedure. The emphasis on persons without high school diplomas can probably be extrapolated to apply to low-literate adults specifically, though reading level was not a factor in this study.

The final report is well organized and well written, adaptable to other states, and worth reading in its entirety.

Correlations/cross-references: This was the third of a trilogy of studies conducted in Iowa under the banner "Iowa's Literacy/Adult Basic Education Target Population Studies." The two earlier studies, "Iowa's Adult Basic Education Students: Descriptive Profiles Based on Motivations, Cognitive Ability and Socio-Demographic Variables" and "Iowa's ESL Students: A Descriptive Profile," were both completed in 1987.

The Iowa study here profiled reinforced earlier studies, such as Fingeret (1983), in finding that low perception of need for ABE is related to older age. This, the study assumes, is probably because as people age they tend to develop a life in which they "get by" adequately without a high school diploma.

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For copy of full report:
ERIC

Reasons for Resistance to ABE and Recommendations for New Delivery Models and Instructional Strategies for the Future

PA Project #98-0027
Date: 1990
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Penn State University, Center for Continuing and Graduate Education, Monroeville
Purpose: To determine why existing local ABE programs are not being attended by resisting adults, specifically how the existing programs are perceived by resisters. Also, to investigate alternate delivery systems, instructional models, and program materials which resisters may perceive as more relevant.

Procedure: Two "professional Black interviewers" were hired and trained. A two-part interview schedule collected basic demographic data and was designed to put interviewees at ease, then ask questions relevant to the study. Twenty interviews were conducted in the Pittsburgh area and tape-recorded. Data was then coded, weighted, and categorized and patterns analyzed.

Summary of findings: The primary reasons resisters had dropped out of school (it is assumed this meant high school) included: teachers, peers, and irrelevance of subject material and of school itself. All resisters said they felt "different" in school. ABE resisters fell into two categories: personal resisters and cultural/ideological resisters. Some also felt they were too old to attend.

The study drew five implications from the interviewees' responses: 1) ABE course design and marketing should be based on potential learners' needs assessment, 2) teachers/facilitators should be sensitive and respectful of learners' life experiences, 3) course design should build in a component to "unlearn" negative associations with schooling, 4) poverty works against intentions to attend (availability, child care, transportation, scheduling), and 5) further research on the links between schooling and resistance, as well as demonstration projects to test whether improved programs would be better attended, are needed.

Comments: The bulk of the final report is comprised of full transcripts of all the interviews.

The study had a very small sample size (N=20) and subjects were predominantly African American (18 vs. 2 white), female (report says 17 females, 8 males, which totals 25), in their 30s (10), and either on welfare or unemployed (13). Subjects were solicited for participation in the study solely through personal contact of two African American interviewers with residents of a housing project in Pittsburgh. Though the project did not set out to address the resistance issue beyond a local area, the sample clearly is not representative of resisters to adult education in the general population and so should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on adult-learner resistance. By the same token, the method of soliciting study participants casts doubt on the validity of applying findings even to the local adult education community.

Correlations/cross-references: Subsequent research projects conducted by

Dr. Quigley are described below. Other Section 353 research projects addressing retention are described in this section as well.

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For copy of full report:
PA State Literacy Resource Centers

A Research Study in Retention

PA Project #98-0027, ERIC #ED324471
Date: 1990
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: The Center for Literacy, Philadelphia, PA
Purpose: To: 1) conduct exploratory analysis of existing student and tutor data, 2) create working definitions of retention and attrition, 3) form research questions regarding variables to be considered, 4) conduct statistical analysis of variables affecting retention, 5) draw program implications based on statistical analysis results, and 6) produce a final report of the study.
Procedure: The researchers analyzed the Center for Literacy's student and tutor records from 1985 through 1989 to summarize demographics and attendance patterns. Using this information along with staff interviews and a literature review, they created working definitions of retention and attrition and formed research questions. Statistical analysis was conducted using a range of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques as well as complex correlational analyses. The data were analyzed using the computer facilities at Research for Better Schools. Results were interpreted, program implications developed, and recommendations for future research presented.
Summary of findings: Variables found to have a statistically significant effect on student retention were: sex, instructional level, age, ethnic membership, dependents, employment, previous educational experience, handicaps, area of residence, and area of instruction. Some program implications developed were: focusing on specific individualized student goals and interests; increasing student support from staff; topic-oriented small-group instruction; increased flexibility for special needs; relevant curriculum and materials; tutor/teacher training oriented to specific student needs; ongoing tutor/teacher support; meaningful and supportive initial and ongoing assessment; portfolio assessment for increased understanding of progress, processes, and goals; student collaboration; and drop-in centers for transition periods.

Some significant tutor variables identified were: age, educational background, and ethnic membership. Program implications were: using tutors as classroom aides, using tutors to assist in drop-in centers or with special projects, providing extra ongoing support and training sessions for tutors, pairing new tutors with experienced tutors for extra support, networking with already existing community services, and tailoring support to the needs of specific communities.
Comments: The Purpose, Methodology, and Summary of Findings sections above are taken almost verbatim from the project's report because its abstract was arranged in a convenient format, similar to that used in this publication.

The statistical analysis of retention patterns appears to provide good baseline information for future retention studies, particularly within this program, though the standard definitions and data-management procedures developed here would apply to any retention study. The report contains voluminous statistics and analyses for study by serious researchers.
Correlations/cross-references: The report provides a useful literature review as of 1990.
Follow-up: The Center for Literacy's "A Research Study in Retention: A Qualitative Approach" (1992) is profiled on page 23.

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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Improving Retention in Adult Basic Education and Recommended Strategies for Effective Instructional and Counselling Interventions

PA Project #98-1053
Date: 1991
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Penn State University, Center for Continuing and Graduate Education, Monroeville
Purpose: To test the hypothesis that attitudes toward prior school experiences are a critical factor in a student's decision to persist or drop out of adult basic education, and whether intervention strategies can be suggested to improve retention.
Procedure: Face-to-face interviews based on the "expectancy-valance participation model" were conducted with 17 "ABE resistant dropouts" (who had dropped out after three weeks or less) and 20 "persisters" from ABE programs at the Connelley Skills Center and Bidwell Training Center in Pittsburgh. The interviews surveyed both groups' attitudes with regard to 1) past school experiences, 2) expectancy levels prior to entering ABE, 3) ABE experiences, and 4) changes in expectancy levels during or after ABE experiences.
Summary of findings: The report provides findings in much more detail than here described. Essentially, resisters considered education important and expected ABE to be like school, but found it less like school than they expected. They entered with few self-doubts, appreciated the open atmosphere, and liked the teachers. In either school or ABE, they had made few friends and had little support outside of school. They were more goal oriented than the persisters, wanted a more intense and challenging academic program than they received, and had not felt close enough to teachers to discuss problems (the counselor did fulfill that role for some). The persisters were found to be more field dependent (less independent) and had more positive feelings about ABE, more friends, more support outside of school, and a perception of more support within ABE.

In view of the findings, the following strategies were recommended: 1) the ABE intake person should collect key information about the student's past and past schooling experiences, 2) more attention should be given to those students who need more attention, 3) ABE needs to be more academically challenging, 4) one-on-one or small-group tutoring should be provided to potential dropouts, 5) the counselor should undertake follow-up on reluctant learners (resisters).
Comments: Like the 1990 Penn State study profiled on page 21, the sample in

this study was very small and predominantly African American (73%), female (64.9%), and unemployed or on welfare (67.6%). The size and composition of the sample limit the applicability of the study to the general population or general ABE population.

The report of this study is written in comparatively dense academic jargon and provides many pages of statistical analyses; as such, it will be inaccessible to most lay readers.

Recommendations for improving retention appear to be based on little supporting evidence.

Correlations/cross-references: This study follows up two earlier studies by Dr. Quigley (1987, 1990), the later profiled above. It also refers to the Iowa study (1989) profiled at the beginning of this section and other studies listed in this project's final report bibliography.

A subsequent study by Dr. Quigley under a 1993 353 grant is profiled below.

"A Research Study in Retention: A Qualitative Approach," also profiled below, appears to contradict some of this study's assumptions.

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For copy of full report:
PA State Literacy Resource Centers

A revised edition of this and two other Quigley studies, *Understanding and Overcoming Resistance to Adult Literacy Education*, is available as a monograph from:
Inst. for the Study of Adult Literacy
Penn State University
204 Calder Way, Suite 209
University Park, PA 16801-4756
814-863-3777
Cost: $35.00

National Evaluation Identifies Retention Data

The Third Interim Report (January 1994) of the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (Contract No. LC90065001 with the U.S. Department of Education) provides "Patterns and Predictors of Client Attendance," a study that relates to several of the Section 353 retention studies reviewed in this publication.

Consider the following findings:

- About 15% of clients in English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs who begin instruction leave the program within their first month.
- 11% of clients continue into a second year.
- About one-third of new clients enroll September and October.
- Clients who enroll in September and October stay longer than those who enter during other months.
- The median number of hours completed are: ESL: 77, ABE: 31, ASE: 26.
- 25% of ESL, 7% of ABE, and 5% of ASE clients receive over 200 hours of instruction during their first year.
- Any type of client who uses support services is more likely to persist than those who do not.
- Any type of client enrolled in day classes is more likely to persist than those enrolled in night classes.
- ESL clients in large classes (31 or more) are more likely to persist than those not in large classes.
- ABE clients in small programs are more likely to persist than those in large programs.
- ABE clients with only a teacher or a teacher and aide are more likely to persist than those with a teacher plus an independent study or a learning-lab component.
- ASE clients enrolled in a curriculum emphasizing workplace or life skills are more likely to persist than those in programs emphasizing academic skills.
- ASE clients in programs serving urban areas, especially large urban areas, are more likely to persist than those in rural programs.
- ESL and ASE clients in very large programs are more likely to persist than those in small programs.
- ESL and ASE clients enrolled in programs with at least some full-time instructional and administrative staff are more likely to persist than clients in programs with only part-time staff.
- ESL and ASE clients with a learning-lab component as part of their instruction are more likely to persist than clients with only a teacher or a teacher and aide.
- ESL and ASE clients who received the most hours of instruction were more likely to be in low-cost than high- or medium-cost programs.
- There were no significant differences in the characteristics of clients who attended 12 hours or more and those who attended 1-11 hours.

For free copies of NEAEP's Interim Reports or a executive summary of the complete study, call Kate Hanley or Laura Williams at 1-800-348-7323 or 703-276-0677, or write to Development Associates, Inc., 1730 North Lynn Street, Arlington, VA 22209. In addition, IBM-compatible diskettes are available for linking files through a client or program ID number in order to facilitate independent research using the same research model as this study employed. ◗

A Research Study in Retention: A Qualitative Approach

Project #98-2025
Date: 1992
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Center for Literacy, Philadelphia, PA
Purpose: To use qualitative (rather than quantitative) research methods to increase knowledge about student retention in adult literacy programs.
Procedure: A total of 99 individual interviews were conducted: 47 with ten adult students, 19 with tutors, 36 with teachers and coordinators. Questions explored factors affecting participation in this urban program. Information was analyzed to identify barriers, obstacles, and supports to program participation and the ways in which learners and staff viewed dropping out of the program. Students were followed from program entry for four months or until dropping out.
Summary of findings: The report concedes that findings are somewhat confusing and contradictory but "they point out some interesting things about the process of participation in an adult literacy program." In summary, a highly individualistic and flexible approach is recommended to meet the needs of adult learners.

In this study, only five of the ten focus students remained in the program after four months.

Findings are described in the following categories:

Expectations: Students' expectations for the literacy program were not a sig-

nificant factor in whether the student stayed in the program or not. Students did not enter the program with an image of themselves quitting. Among staff, no single profile or combination of events assured retention or predicted persistence.

Relationships: As for relationships with classmates, a "roomful of learners does not a community make"; support from fellow learners cannot be assumed, and "any research which argues that one type of learning context is more successful than another, but does not actually consider the community aspect of a class is lacking important data." As for relationships with teachers, all the students had high praise for their instructors. As for relationships with others outside of the program, support seems to be desirable but it is not tied to program participation.

Obstacles: Some students can and do persist despite difficulties, while others cannot or do not. As for teachers, family and time pressures make it difficult to follow up on student concerns.

Strategies: Obstacles to learning are likely, and students had little ability to "take a reactive stance" against obstacles. Educators found dropouts often unreachable for phone follow-up, or the teacher didn't have time to call dropouts. Follow-up takes time, and there is no consistent set of strategies for dealing with it.

Perceptions about the learning program: Students can drop out without feeling bad about themselves. Among teachers there was no unified perception of students' leaving the program. The conclusion is that departure should not necessarily be viewed as failure but rather as a hiatus.

The study provided a number of recommendations to help increase student retention, including that programs should: 1) form a retention policy; 2) provide program flexibility; 3) provide retention information in staff training (acknowledge it, address it quickly, provide strategies); 4) provide independent learning materials for students who come and go; 5) conduct further retention research.

Comments: A summary of findings would have been helpful in this report; instead, all findings were embedded within each section (though very well organized).

Despite the small sample, this is a valuable and rare study on retention in that it analyzes qualitative rather than quantitative data; students are considered as individuals rather than generally staged against a potentially faulty hypothesis. Indeed, generalizations are not drawn for a situation that may well be individual in nature. The study is thoughtfully designed and data is thoroughly analyzed from all angles.

Correlations/cross-references: This study notes that other retention research which "concludes that a mismatch between student expectations and a teacher or tutor's educational approach can lead to poor retention ... appears to be a reductionist explanation based on the data from this study."

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For copy of full report:

PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Retaining Reluctant Learners in ABE Through the Student Intake Period

PA Project #98-3036, in ERIC but ED# not available at press time

Date: 1993

State: Pennsylvania

Contractor: Penn State University, Center for Continuing and Graduate Education, Monroeville, PA, in cooperation with The Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Penn State University

Purpose: Continuing a line of earlier 353-funded projects investigating resistance to participation in ABE and reluctance to stay in ABE, to learn if "reluctant learners" can be retained through 1) program structural accommodation and 2) more effective teacher/counselor intervention.

Procedure: Four groups of five students each were formed. Group 1, the control group, received no "treatment" as per the study; these students were simply referred to regular classes and records were kept as to how long they stayed in the program. Group 2 was treated through a "team approach," referred to regular classes but with a counselor-teacher team strategy affording students more individual attention. Group 3 was treated through a "small-group approach"; they were placed into existing small learning groups of five to six students each; they were observed as to whether more peer-group interaction would make a difference in retention. Group 4 was treated with a "one-on-one" approach; these basic literacy students were referred to one-on-one tutoring and observed as to whether "more complete teacher attention" would make a difference.

An additional component of this study attempted to determine if differing learning styles had an impact on retention. Using two instruments, including the Learning Style Assessment Scale developed by Dr. Daniele Flannery of Penn State Harrisburg, some learning-style data was gathered on all the participating students.

Summary of findings: The small-group approach appeared to be the most promising in improving retention: three of five students successfully completed the ABE program. The one-on-one approach retained two of five. The team approach retained one of five. The control group retained no students to program completion.

The study suggested that it would be helpful to identify reluctant learners at intake and refer them to alternative program choices.

Also, the study discovered a correlation between high field dependence and high global learning style among dropouts.

Comments: The report concedes that the study would benefit by replication using a larger sample. Indeed, the sample was possibly too small and its composition too homogeneous to render a valid correlation between instructional method and retention rate. Even ten students in each type of group, as the study had anticipated having, is probably insufficient.

The term *reluctant learner* is defined only in terms of the characteristics of adult student dropouts, as derived from the related earlier Penn State studies on retention.

The report includes extensive statistical analysis, though not as densely so as in the earlier studies' reports.

Correlations/cross-references: Three earlier Quigley studies (only those under 353 grants) are profiled above. Related studies are cited in this study's report, including the Iowa studies (1989, 1991) profiled in this section.

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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

SECTION FOUR

Surveys and Evaluations

Credibility and Acceptability of Pennsylvania Schools and College Toward the GED Diploma

PA Project #98-9008
Date: 1989
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Adult Education Linkage Services, Troy, PA
Purpose: To survey postsecondary institutions in Pennsylvania to determine admissions policies and procedures and admissions officers' awareness of the General Educational Development test and GED graduates.
Procedure: The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency provided a mailing list of all 344 of its approved postsecondary institutions in the state. A survey instrument was designed and mailed to admissions officers at all 344 institutions, including branch campuses. A second mailing of the same survey provided a total of 240 forms returned, or 71% response. Returns were categorized according to type of institution (four-year public, four-year private, two-year public, two-year private, business schools, nursing and health-care schools, and trade/technical schools). Response rate ranged from a low of 50% from two-year public institutions to a high of 91% from nursing and health-care schools.

The survey was divided into three sections. Part 1 consisted of 20 questions designed to determine the institution's policies and procedures in processing applications for admission. Part 2 was designed to measure admissions officers' knowledge of the GED test itself. Part 3 posed five general questions to determine the attitudes of admissions officers and their institutions toward GED graduates and the GED test.
Summary of findings: The vast majority (82%) of institutions reported having GED graduates enrolled, and 61% of admissions officers considered the GED diploma to be equivalent to a regular high school diploma; 61% said the same of a GED credential (without an accompanying school diploma). However, 64% preferred admitting applicants with a regular diploma and 60% required additional substantiating data from GED graduates. In general, however, admissions policies were the same for all applicants, regardless of type of diploma, in 64% of institutions.

Respondents were more evenly split on the question of whether GED graduates are more able to handle postsecondary work because of their maturity: 32% yes, 40% no, and 28% not sure. In a related question, whether GED graduates require more remedial help than others, a similar split emerged: 39% yes, 35% no, and 29% not sure.

The most striking aspect of the survey response was admissions officers' lack of knowledge of the GED test in Part 2 of the survey. In answer to every question, a range of 39% to 74% were unsure of the GED's subject content.

Part 3 revealed that 56% of institutions set minimum acceptable GED scores for admission. Indeed, 59% of the institutions offer GED preparation classes. Also, GED graduates were only half as likely to need financial assistance than others. Responses were fairly evenly split in answer to whether admissions officers perceive GED graduates as coming from lower socioeconomic groups.
Comments: This was an informative study, if only to point out the need to disseminate more information to postsecondary admissions officers.
Follow-up: The project applied for and received additional funds to produce awareness brochures for postsecondary institutions and employers.
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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Summary of Adult Education Certification Requirements

DAEL #SA-901
Date: 1990 (?)
State: Arizona
Contractor: Arizona Staff Development Consortium
Purpose: The report for this project, as received from the DAEL Clearinghouse, is merely a set of lists and descriptions. No other narrative is provided. The presumed purpose was to gather information on certification requirements for ABE teachers in every state as a basis for revising Arizona's own requirements.
Procedure: Data-collection methodology is not described in this report. The presumed sources of information are individual State adult education offices.
Summary of findings: States were broken down by those: 1) having no state certification requirements (24), 2) requiring a regular teaching certificate (13), 3) requiring some adult education training and background (11), and 4) currently undergoing changes in certification requirements (2).

States having no certification requirements were Alaska, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. Mississippi requires a bachelor's degree but no teaching certification.

States requiring a regular teaching certificate only were Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Utah. Utah waives the requirement in some rural areas.

States requiring some adult education training background, to varying degrees, were Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Louisiana, Minnesota, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, as well as Washington, DC.

States undergoing changes at the time of the report were Arizona and New York.

The remainder of the report describes each state's specific requirements. Of most interest are those states that had a specific adult education training requirement. Delaware, for example, required one of the following: teacher certification plus six semester hours of college-level coursework in adult educa-

tion, six approved inservice credits in adult education sponsored by the state or the higher education system, or three approved adult education credits and two years of internship. In Arkansas, an individual holding a valid Arkansas teaching certificate must additionally complete 12 graduate and/or graduate semester hours in adult education in specified course areas; those without a certificate need a bachelor's degree plus 18 hours. Anyone teaching adult education in Arkansas must also pass the National Teachers of English Test of Professional Knowledge, and all of these requirements must be completed within three years of hire. California required a Preliminary Designated Subjects Adult Credential; ESL teachers also needed a Supplementary Authorization, requiring 12 upper-division courses. In addition to a teaching certificate, Texas required 12 clock hours of staff development training annually.

Idaho, on the other hand, dropped its certification requirement altogether "because salaries in ABE/ESL positions are so low ... that the requirement seemed unreasonable." Pennsylvania had no certification requirement; however, "ABE teachers are encouraged to be certified in some areas of education."

These findings, along with public hearings, determined that certification requirements for teachers of adult education in Arizona should be reviewed. As a result, the Arizona Adult Education Committee was successful in changing the requirement from a six-year to a one-year renewable certificate.

Comments: The perennial questions are: 1) whether adult education teachers should indeed be certified teachers, 2) whether there should be a specific adult education certification, and 3) why such wildly variable certification requirements exist among states. Despite the state-by-state requirements now in place, the certification issue remains unresolved nationally.

Correlations/cross-references: The certification requirements as listed here were taken in part from the "State Profiles Report" component of "Study of ABE/ESL Instructor Training Approaches: Key Elements of Adult Education Teacher and Volunteer Training Programs," profiled on page 30.

A 1983 Pennsylvania Department of Education study called "Feasibility of Requiring and Delivering Certification for Adult Basic Education" drew two general conclusions: 1) examination of the literature indicated no clear value of educational certification and 2) the issues, findings, and discussions reported no evidence of philosophy, purpose, or correlation with teaching performance and no body of acceptable research to support a certification requirement. The study concluded that there must be a philosophy, clear purpose, demonstration of a relationship between performance and competence, and further research before any certification requirement be put in place.

Follow-up: For Arizona, the next step was to collect additional information and write recommendations for changes in the specific requirements for renewable certificates.

Contact information (for current information on Arizona's certification requirement, not necessarily on this report):

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For copy of full report:
DAEL Clearinghouse

An Evaluation of the Statewide Adult Basic Education System (SABES)

Date: 1990-92 (3-year, 3-phase project)
State: Massachusetts
Contractor: Center for Resource Management, South Hampton, NH
Purpose: To design, implement, and report findings of a long-term evaluation of the state ABE system's accomplishments, staff, activities, resources, and impact.
Procedure: In Massachusetts, the Statewide Adult Basic Education System (SABES), formed in 1990, is a "support system to lead and implement program and staff development activities aimed at improving the quality and impact of ABE services." SABES encompasses five Regional Support Centers, a Central Resource Center, and ABE programs under contract with the Massachusetts Department of Education. Following an extensive study-design phase, this evaluation study interviewed SABES staff, reviewed SABES documents, surveyed ABE program directors and practitioners, and developed case studies on three ABE programs representing "various features and contexts."
Summary of findings: An extensive report details findings of the various aspects of the project. It is difficult to summarize all the findings in this limited space; however, several general conclusions bear mention:

- "SABES is an extremely important and valuable part of the ABE system in Massachusetts; indeed, it has the potential to become the infrastructure that makes this traditionally fragmented and isolated field a 'system' at all." Accomplishments to date were considered impressive, particularly in light of increasingly tight budget constraints. The system should be continued.
- Staff development efforts were exemplary and should be expanded.
- Program development efforts, though not fully developed, were providing a sound model and should continue.
- SABES-supported local research and design efforts were gaining clarity; however, limited resources called for careful prioritizing and linkage with other SABES components.
- SABES technical assistance services (financial, administrative, and material) were valuable and should be expanded.

Comments: The extensive detail of the projects' final reports and executive summaries all lead to the bottom-line recommendation that SABES was operating on the right course and should be continued and expanded. Contained within each section of the reports are a plethora of observations and insights of value to any overseeing organization attempting to coordinate ABE services, particularly if they would be interested in using SABES as a model.

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For copy of full report:
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Comm. of Mass. Dept. of Education
Adult & Community Education
Learning Services
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Evaluating the Use and Impact of Section 353 Projects

PA Project #98-2068
Date: 1992
State: Pennsylvania
Contractor: Adult Education Linkage Services, Troy, PA
Purpose: To survey adult educators in Pennsylvania to determine 1) the extent of their awareness of the availability and nature of Section 353 projects, products, and information and 2) the extent of adaptation/adoption of Section 353

projects conducted in Pennsylvania in FY89 and FY90.

Procedure: A survey instrument was developed and mailed to 286 program directors and 1,704 persons, mainly program personnel, on the mailing list of "What's the Buzz?" (the state adult basic and literacy education newsletter). Part 1 of the survey, "Project Impact Study," asked about general awareness of, use and adoption/adaptation of, and participation in 353 projects. Part 2, another "Project Impact Study," asked about the awareness and usefulness of AdvancE (the state literacy resource center) and two newsletters funded under Section 353. Part 3, "Project Use Survey," had two pages, one for those who had used Section 353 projects and one for those who had not.

Summary of findings: Among program personnel, 58% of respondents reported familiarity with purposes for 353 projects, 44% said they had used information from projects, 34% had participated in a project, 62% had adapted projects, and 18% had adopted projects. General impact of 353 projects was deemed "very successful" by 33%, "somewhat successful" by 65%, and "mediocre" by 2%. No one indicated "not successful."

Among program directors, 89% of respondents reported familiarity with purposes for 353 projects and 69% said they had used information from projects. Program directors were not asked some of the other questions but were asked questions on administration relative to 353 projects. Though 80% of program directors said they had brought Section 353 information to the attention of their staff, only 39% of program personnel recalled such activity.

Though projects, such as staff development workshops, were considered effective, a large number of ABLE practitioners were not being reached, and many of those who were being reached were not using information or products effectively.

Many more specific survey results and verbatim comments are available in the project's final report.

Comments: Unreturned survey forms could indicate a higher-than-reported level of disinterest in 353 projects.

Correlations/cross-references: The survey was based on two publications of the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education: "Evaluating the Implementation and Impact of Section 353 Projects" (1988) and "Effective Section 353 State Administration: A Self-Study Guide" (1988), as well as a 1988 Florida study, "Impact of 310 Projects, 1980-84." The director of this project was unable to secure a copy of the Florida study, presumed to be the only prior definitive study in this area.

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For copy of full report:

PA State Literacy Resource Centers

310-353 Program Impact Assessment Report

Date: 1992

State: Florida

Contractor: Center for Instructional Development and Services, Florida State University

Purpose: To determine how well 310/353 projects conducted 1984-90 in Florida have increased the knowledge of adult educators in methods, techniques, and materials available for adult education; to what degree these projects' exemplary programs and models have helped promote more effective adult education practices; how project design, implementation, dissemination procedures, and other factors promote or inhibit the success of projects; and what the scope of the 310/353 projects funded from year to year have been.

Procedure: The study included a literature review; a telephone survey of key adult educators; a written survey of adult education administrators, teachers, project directors, literacy center directors, and university faculty; a review of 310/353 project and materials; and the creation of a database of information on 310/353 projects funded during 1984-90.

Summary of findings: Literacy is the most pressing need of Florida's adult education population; teacher training and staff development are also "extremely important." No targeted categories or populations have been disproportionately or over funded; a tremendous need continues to exist in all areas, but ESL, at-risk youth, handicapped adults, and rural residents should receive greater funding.

Presentations and workshops at the Adult and Community Educators of Florida Conference and the Florida Literacy Conference are the most valuable 310/353 dissemination sources. Half of respondents would make no changes to the dissemination process; others suggested adopting dissemination criteria, a statewide clearinghouse, and project evaluations. Directors share information on 310/353 projects most often through the mail in response to direct requests or assumed interest in a specific project.

Most interviewees were satisfied with the present application/funding process. Several suggested providing feedback on rejected proposals and awarding grants on time. Opinion was divided on whether or not the Bureau of Adult and Community Education (BACE) was doing a good job monitoring projects.

Leadership, effective management, adequate funding, and project planning were identified as crucial to success. Setting and monitoring goals was the most frequently cited means of evaluating projects.

A majority of respondents had participated in some way in one or more 310/353 projects. Materials that support ABE, literacy, and GED were viewed as most relevant; more teachers than administrators ranked teacher-training materials as relevant. Only one-third of respondents had ever adopted an exemplary project. Nearly 95% felt that 310/353 had contributed to the successful execution of adult education in their county or organization.

Of 101 projects funded during 1984-90, 29 were evaluated on the basis of systematic design and development, as well as outcomes. The most outstanding criticism was that only six projects included an evaluation of their process, and many of the materials submitted to BACE did not include thorough documentation of needs assessments, dissemination activities, and problems encountered.

The study concluded that the grant program should continue to focus on its existing priorities rather than expand to encompass new ones; however, staff development should receive greater funding.

Comments: Much information was derived from this study, though little in-depth criticism and recommendations for improvement of the 353 process are documented.

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For copy of full report, including Executive Summary and Directory of Projects:
Florida Department of Education

What Has Happened to Iowa's GED Graduates? A Two-, Five-, and Ten-Year Follow-Up Study

ERIC #ED344047
Date: 1992
State: Iowa
Contractor: Iowa State Department of Education
Purpose: To conduct a longitudinal study to determine the short-term (two-year), intermediate-term (five-year), and long-term (ten-year) impact of earning a GED and Iowa's high school equivalency diploma.
Procedure: Current addresses of Iowa GED graduates from 1980, 1985, and 1988 (2,500 from each year) were located through driver's license numbers, which correspond to the identification number used on GED Tests applications.

A six-page, 40-item follow-up survey was mailed to these individuals, including GED graduates who had participated in an ABE program, in the spring of 1991. Of the 7,500 forms mailed, 1,597 were returned, divided roughly evenly among the three periods.
Summary of findings: GED graduates had significant gains in employment between the time just prior to passing the GED and 1990, hours worked per week, job skill level, job satisfaction, personal income, reduction in welfare, job quality, property acquisition, and personal savings.

Gains in hours worked were greatest between two and five years after the GED and leveled off between five and ten years. Gains in job skills, job satisfaction, personal income, savings, indices of job quality, and economic benefits increased steadily over time.

The overwhelming majority of GED graduates who had been enrolled in an ABE program reported that attending classes had helped them acquire the requisite knowledge to pass the GED.

Because the researchers acknowledged a possible response bias in respect to factors such as gender, income, age, and educational level, they conducted a second analysis on findings. No bias was found except in age, since younger subjects were underrepresented in the survey.
Comments: As the final report acknowledges, the study had no control group of traditional high school graduates or dropouts from traditional high school programs against which to compare achievement levels.

The study assumed that subjects were responding truthfully to the survey questions.

An array of appendices consume half of the final report. These include references, information on the instruments employed in the study, qualitative comments, and descriptive statistics.

At the front of the report are selected subjective comments from study participants on the impact of the GED on their lives. Many of these comments would be useful in ABE publicity campaigns.
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ERIC

The Year in Review, Volume 1: 1991-92, Teachers Learning: An Evaluation of ABE Staff Development in Virginia

Date: 1992
State: Virginia
Contractor: Virginia Adult Educators Research Network
Purpose: To identify the extent to which current ABE staff development mechanisms in Virginia (a centralized resource center, a regionalized training program, a centralized annual conference, and a statewide newsletter) meet teachers' needs for skill and knowledge development.
Methodology: The project used primarily qualitative methods. First, it assembled an advisory group to provide suggestions for making the project practical and relevant. Data was collected through interviews of 50 individuals at two summer institutes; a survey returned by 72 teachers, tutors, and administrators; and focus-group interviews in six areas. Interview data was transcribed onto computer disk and printed out onto nearly 1,000 pages. Information was coded into categories such as "types of learning activities mentioned, characteristics of good workshops, descriptions of how teachers say they have changed what they do and less related topics like the desire for teacher benefits, descriptions of teaching techniques, etc." After intense data manipulation, themes emerged, which were compared and analyzed manually.
Summary of findings: A number of key findings are detailed in the final report, including many direct quotes. Among the main points (here paraphrased or quoted directly):

At the local level: 1) Teachers and students create a context for learning. 2) Teachers who have experience in public school classrooms say they transfer this knowledge to their work in adult classrooms. 3) Some teachers report that they learn from their students. 4) Some teachers learn from other people in their classrooms. 5) Many teachers and volunteers apply their personal relationships and prior personal experiences. 6) A few teachers turn to the professional literature for help in developing their teaching skills. 7) Local programs provide access to learning resources. 8) Almost all teachers call on local administrators for information but not instructional assistance. 9) Administrators see themselves as teachers see them: as responsible for creating a climate, etc. 10) Almost all teachers recall instances where observing and talking with other teachers gave them insights into solutions for their own classroom problems. 11) Teachers talk about the value of their work based on their own experiences with students and contrast this with their perceived low status as ABE teachers. 12) Cultural differences sometimes interfere with communication between teachers and students.

At the regional level: 1) Teachers generally describe "cluster training" (regional workshops) as interesting and practical. 2) The most frequent criticism of cluster training is that some presenters do not practice "good adult education" (they lecture too much without group participation). 3) Teachers would like a greater role in cluster training. 4) Cluster training is organized on a traditional "expert training model."

At the state level: 1) Section 353 projects provide resources for staff development. 2) Teachers need to feel a part of the statewide community of adult education. 3) Many teachers want to be part of a more coherent system and for their own learning to be part of a coherent plan. 4) The state workshop activities that teachers and administrators find useful reflect their own specific programmatic situations. 5) Satisfaction with the resource center appears to reflect teachers' geographic location, area of teaching, resources available at their sites, and years of experience.

Comments: Because the survey instrument and interviews were based on a broad survey of the existing literature on staff development, they could be adapted by other states interested in assessing staff development, perhaps localizing terminology here and there.

The report provides not only a revealing and informative look at adult literacy staff development in one state but also descriptions of various staff development philosophies and models in general.

Correlations/cross-references: An extensive bibliography provides a body of literature related to staff development.

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Virginia Adult Educators Research Network
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Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Survey: Interim Reports

PA Project #98-2069

Date: 1992, 1993

State: Pennsylvania (similar projects in California, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Washington)

Contractor: Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

Purpose: To conduct a multiyear state survey of literacy among adults aged 16 through 64, based on the concurrent National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) being conducted for Educational Testing Service (ETS) by its subcontractor, Westat, Inc. The goals were to 1) draw the sample, 2) prepare survey materials, 3) train interviewers, 4) collect data, 5) score and enter data, 6) apply population weights, 7) scale and analyze data, 8) report findings, and 9) coordinate management of the survey.

Procedure: Under rigid quality-control standards, the project prepared a list of homes to visit in Pennsylvania (along with 11 other participating states), based on the 1990 Census. The literacy survey instrument developed for the NALS was supplemented with five state-developed, state-specific multiple-choice questions. Interviewers and district supervisors were recruited and trained. Hour-long interviews in 1,000 households were conducted between February and June 1992. As ETS received materials from the field, trained scorers reviewed and scored responses; 20% of the interviews were rescored to assure 96% score reliability.

Data collection field work was completed in August, 1992. Scoring and data entry of Pennsylvania cases followed the same procedure as the NALS cases. This was completed by November 1992. Cases from the PALS were merged with cases collected in Pennsylvania by the NALS by February 1993. During April and May 1993 data was scaled.

Summary of findings: According to plan, findings were incomplete pending final analysis, due after the deadline for this publication.

Comments: These are primarily compilations of progress reports released to state survey leaders during the multiyear project, rather than final reports in standard Pennsylvania format.

Pennsylvania-specific questions appear less comprehensive than those listed for some other participating states.

The first year's report frequently refers to funding limitations.

Correlations/cross-references: This study was an integral component of the NALS, whose working definition of literacy—specifically *prose*, *document*, and *quantitative* literacy tasks—applied to the state surveys.

Follow-up: Pennsylvania data analysis was to be completed by December 31, 1993 and a final report prepared.

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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

Assessing the Need, Acceptability and Resources for Adult Literacy Staff Development through Distance Education in Rural PA Recommended Models

PA Project #98-3001

Date: 1993

State: Pennsylvania

Contractor: Penn State University

Purpose: In rural Pennsylvania, to 1) determine staff attitudes toward various interactive distance education technologies for purposes of staff development, 2) provide an overview of the equipment accessible to staff, and 3) review the literature on distance-education staff development in North America.

Procedure: A random selection of 25% of adult literacy teachers and tutors in rural areas derived from regional staff development center mailing lists, along with all corresponding program administrators, were surveyed. The instrument design was based on the literature review. Of 306 surveys mailed, 45% were returned and 40% (N=122) were usable, i.e. contained answers to an adequate number of questions.

Summary of findings: Fifty percent of administrators, 57% of paid teachers/staff, and 44% of volunteer tutors considered staff development important, though 57%, 54%, and 78%, respectively, said they had already received adequate training and 61%, 61%, and 48% felt they needed more staff development. Willing to travel one-half hour to attend staff development programs were 86% of administrators, 77% of teachers/staff, and 72% of volunteers. (This is not clearly stated in the report; figures are taken from Table 1).

The most available equipment for distance education delivery were video cameras and VCRs (70% among administrators and teachers/staff); however, volunteers seemed mostly unaware of the existence of such resources.

Regarding use of various media for staff development, administrators were slightly more comfortable with computers than video, while teachers/staff were slightly more comfortable with video than computers. Volunteers were much less comfortable with computers than with video.

The project recommended a demonstration model employing a "phase-in process" of interactive distance education, starting with audio, the medium considered the most comfortable, and later computer and video. Three distance-education staff development scenarios are offered for Pennsylvania.

Comments: This is a rare look at adult educators' attitudes on distance education, as well as a survey of current delivery systems.

Correlations/cross-references: A substantial section of the final report is devoted to a description of distance-education de-

livery models in several other states and Canada, along with a bibliography.
Follow-up: At this writing it was too early to report whether the recommendations were implemented.
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PA State Literacy Resource Centers

U.S. Dept. of Education Evaluation Projects

In addition to the state-administered Section 353 grants, the U.S. Department of Education directly funds research projects under Section 383 of the Adult Education Act, which provides for evaluation of activities conducted under the Act, through the Research Information Network.

What follows are reviews of three recent Section 383-funded studies which would be of interest to a broad audience involved in adult basic and literacy education.

Study of ABE/ESL Instructor Training Approaches: Key Elements of Adult Education Teacher and Volunteer Training Programs and State Profiles Report

Project #VN90001001, DAEL: #SD-10 (Key Elements) and #R-4 (State Profiles Report), ERIC #ED344056 and #ED338605 (State Profiles Report)
Date: 1991
Contractor: Pelavin Associates, Inc., Washington, DC, with San Francisco State University and Adult Learning Resource Center
Purpose: To identify elements of effective ABE/ESL staff development practices through a research review and site visits to nine staff development programs identified as providing effective training for adult education teachers and volunteer instructors.
Procedure: A survey of the literature produced a framework for examining nine adult education programs to gather information on their staff development practices. The researchers visited programs in Washington, Delaware, California, Minnesota, Florida, California, New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Four elements associated with delivery of training services were examined: 1) experienced and dedicated training administrator and staff, 2) decentralized training services, 3) systematic follow-up of training, and 4) evaluation procedures. Five elements associated with the content of effective training services were examined: 1) providing training services responsive to the needs of teachers and volunteer instructors, 2) involving participants in the learning process, 3) modeling appropriate instruction, 4) placing learning within a theoretical framework, and 5) providing training topics appropriate for adult education teachers and volunteer instructors. Only state-administered efforts were examined, not local inservice plans.

The *State Profiles Report* component of this study examined ABE and ESL staff training activities through Office of Vocational and Adult Education files, state reports and descriptions requested from state directors of adult education and state staff responsible for Section 353-funded activities, and reports and descriptions of training activities requested from directors of training programs. In this separate volume, data is presented in a consistent, state-by-state format, including number of ABE and ESL participants in FY1989, federal/state/local expenditures for adult education (FY1989), number of adult education teachers (FY1989) and volunteer instructors (FY1990), state certification requirements, a list of training activities conducted during FY1990, and descriptions of these activities, including the number of people in attendance and the content of the training. Data from Florida was unavailable, but staff development facts on the other 49 states and the District of Columbia are listed.
Summary of findings: Of the four elements of training-services delivery examined, the first two—"experienced, dedicated training staff and decentralized training services—were central elements at most study sites. The other two elements—systematic follow-up and evaluation of training services—were less likely to be incorporated within the delivery of training services, though frequently cited in research literature." Limited financial resources and the part-time nature of the adult education delivery system are cited as reasons for these shortcomings.

Anecdotal data was gathered on the content of training services. The project's final report provides this information in full detail. In general, *training in response to teachers' and volunteer instructors' needs* included the use of teacher surveys, workshop evaluations, training staff recommendations, and informal needs assessments. *Involving the participant in the learning process* included use of a practice-oriented approach, learner-centered strategies, peer coaching, teacher-action research, and study circles. *Modeling appropriate instruction* included the use of videos primarily. Study sites *placing learning within a theoretical framework* introduced research literature as a context for subject matter presented or wove theory into the training session to provide a rationale for applying certain teaching techniques. *Providing training in appropriate content areas* included both subject-matter and pedagogical content.
Comments: The final report provides a basic theoretical background for effective staff development, but the many examples of practices within specific programs across the country are what breathe life into this framework. The omission of local staff development efforts leaves many questions, though its absence is understandable within the limited scope of this project. At the very least, however, this project provides model principles for designing adult education staff development programs.
Correlations/cross-references: Note that the *State Profiles Report* is a separate document. This and the *Key Elements* component were completed at different times during 1991, and both ERIC and the DAEL Clearinghouse ship them separately.
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ERIC *or* DAEL Clearinghouse

Study of Federal Funding Sources and Services for Adult Education

Project #LC89058001, DAEL #R-8, ERIC #ED355398
Date: 1992
Contractor: COSMOS Corporation, Washington, DC

Purpose: Under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, the researchers were authorized to collect and synthesize available information about all adult education programs within the Federal government that support literacy, basic skills, English as a second language, or adult secondary education. This was Phase 1 of a two-phase project aimed at improving coordination among Federal, State, and local adult education programs.

Procedure: Through face-to-face and telephone interviews, researchers gathered information from representatives of some 85 programs in 12 separate Federal agencies regarding their funding of adult education activities and types of services provided. Potential programs for study were categorized as: 1) primary, in which adult education is the priority objective of the authorizing legislation; 2) secondary, in which adult education is an approved activity within the authorizing legislation; or 3) indirect, in which there is no explicit legislative mandate but a policy decision is required to fund adult education activities.

Summary of findings: The study identified 85 programs in 12 Federal agencies that authorize or support adult education activities. Of these, 27 were categorized as primary, 27 as secondary, and 31 as indirect. The agencies with the largest numbers of adult education programs were the Department of Education with 38, the Department of Health and Human Services with 13, and the Department of Labor with seven. The other Federal agencies were ACTION (VISTA), Appalachian Regional Commission, Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of the Interior, Department of Justice, and Department of Veterans Affairs. (The twelfth agency, the Tennessee Valley Authority, was eliminated from the study because funds for adult education services could not be documented.)

Figures compiled from 31 of the programs indicated that $247,090,059 was spent on adult education in FY1989, most through the Department of Education under the Adult Education Act. The total expenditure is considered a low estimate because many Federal programs authorizing multiple activities do not require separate reporting for each type of funding, including adult education activities. Even within the Department of Education, the figure does not include funds from the Job Training Partnership Act, Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program, or the State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants.

Support for adult education is concentrated on providing direct educational services in basic skills and literacy. Activities such as research, dissemination, and staff training represent only about 4% of the monies accounted for in FY1989.

Two barriers to collecting information for this study were identified: 1) lack of complete data collected from State and local programs and 2) paper filing systems which were difficult to access. The project recommended improved data-reporting and -storage systems.

Comments: This study represents important groundwork for improving coordination of federally funded adult education activities. All the data that was possible to collect is presented clearly, program by program, in a 145-page final report, plus 78 pages of appendices.

Correlations/cross-references: Phase 2 of this project is described below in "Patterns of Promise: State and Local Strategies for Improving Coordination in Adult Education Programs."

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ERIC or DAEL Clearinghouse

Patterns of Promise: State and Local Strategies for Improving Coordination in Adult Education Programs

Project #LC89058001; DAEL #R-9, ERIC #ED355398

Date: 1992

Contractor: COSMOS Corporation, Washington, DC

Purpose: Under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, the researchers were authorized to investigate State and local program efforts for delivering coordinated services in adult education and to provide recommendations about the need for program coordination and facilitation among Federal, State, and local levels. This was Phase 2 of a two-phase project aimed at improving coordination among Federal, State, and local adult education programs.

Procedure: The study examined two aspects of interagency coordination of adult education services: 1) structural arrangements that facilitate the ways in which State and local policymakers undertake coordination activities and 2) organizational and communication strategies used in coordination. Five model sites for study (in Georgia, Michigan, Oregon, New York, and California) were selected based on evidence of coordination of services between 1) the State adult education office and at least one other state agency and 2) a local adult education program and other local programs. The five sites were examined using a case-study protocol: two days were spent at the State adult education office and one day at the local program site, interviewing key personnel, observing interagency meetings, and reviewing available documentation of coordination efforts. The five cases were then cross-analyzed, factors were identified that inhibit coordination, and steps for promoting interagency coordination were recommended.

Summary of findings: The study found three common organizational strategies for successful coordination of services: 1) development of interagency agreements for transferring funds, services, or staff between agencies, 2) State-established incentives to encourage interagency coordination, and 3) State-provided training and technical assistance to help local sites in coordination activities.

The programs being examined demonstrated two common interpersonal communication strategies for successful coordination: 1) mechanisms to promote ongoing communication across agencies and 2) enhancement of existing relationships among staff in cooperating agencies through new initiatives.

In addition, new organizational and fiscal resources were identified to strengthen State and local initiatives.

The programs examined in this study enjoyed several key benefits as a result of having coordinated services: 1) enhanced political visibility, 2) expansion of State and local agencies' networks, and 3) more integrated delivery of education and support services to adult education clients.

Obstacles to coordination were 1) limitations of Federal regulations and data-reporting requirements (including differing definitions of target client groups and data-collection elements), 2) staff turnover in agencies and changing priorities, and 3) emergence of "turf" issues.

Three coordination strategies applicable to other State and local programs were: 1) a strong leadership role in fostering interagency coordination, 2) provision of technical assistance to support

coordination, and 3) the importance of negotiation among organizations.

The researchers recommended four possible options for improvement of Federal and State agencies to: 1) continue addressing the need for common definitions, outcome measures, and data-reporting systems; 2) provide technical assistance and training services to State adult-education, job-training, and social-service agency representatives in negotiating and carrying out interagency coordination; 3) continue providing State adult education office staff with information about methods for pooling resources and establishing demonstration programs to experiment with models for integrated service delivery, and 4) develop and disseminate information regarding effective practice in interagency coordination.

Recommendations for State adult education officials were to: 1) develop incentives to encourage local programs to work collaboratively, 2) provide training and technical assistance activities for local program staff so they can learn about strategies for working with other agencies (particularly in workplace and family literacy), and 3) disseminate information regarding successful practices in coordination and develop peer-assistance networks to be used by local staff.

The final report details all the above aspects of the five case studies.

Comments: Because such a vast array of providers delivers adult education services, the field has been fertile ground for problems such as "duplication of services " and "turf wars" for many years. Still, many local program administrators remain resistant to any real efforts at service "linkages," i.e. interagency coordination. This study is a valuable look at successful service coordination, and plants many soundly researched ideas for State adult education offices and local programs to consider in their own coordination efforts.

Correlations/cross-references: Phase 1 of this project, "Study of Federal Funding Sources and Services for Adult Education," is described above.

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ERIC or DAEL Clearinghouse

The National Adult Literacy Survey

The National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) was a landmark study completed in 1993. It is being cited in both professional literature and the popular press for its revelations on the state of literacy in America near the turn of the millennium. The study was funded through various sources, including the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Because of its relation to the research projects profiled in this publication, we provide here a summary of the NALS, from "Report Shows Large Number of Adults Have Limited Literacy Skills," by Susan McDonald (Laubach Literacy Action's Literacy Advance, Vol. 17, No. 4, 1993), *excerpted with permission.*

The recent literacy survey ... is the first major scientific study to provide a picture of the abilities of American adults to use printed material to accomplish day-to-day tasks. The study found that a very large number of people—90 million—have "quite limited" abilities.

Released to the public by the U.S. Department of Education on September 8, the survey tested people on their ability to perform a variety of tasks "that reflect the types of materials and demands they encounter in their daily lives."

The survey was conducted in three parts: a national survey of 13,600 people; state surveys of 1,000 people each in 12 different states; and a survey of 1,100 inmates in 80 federal and state prisons.

Participants were asked to perform tasks as simple as locating the time or place of a meeting on a form, or as difficult as analyzing long, complex documents and making inferences from them.

The survey tested participants' skills in the areas of prose, document, and quantitative literacy. It described people as performing at one of five different skills levels in each of the three areas, with Level 1 being the lowest skill level and Level 5 the highest.

Survey participants represented both sexes, all races, and a variety of socioeconomic and education levels. More than 21 percent (40 million) of the adults performed at the lowest skill level. Some of them could identify a specific piece of information in a short news article, or total an entry on a deposit slip. Many could not. Another 25 percent (50 million) demonstrated higher but still limited skills by testing at Level 2. For instance, they could total up the cost of a purchase or find something on a street map.

When the NALS report applied these findings to the general U.S. population, it estimated that about half the adults in the U.S. perform at Skill Levels 1 or 2. This indicates that the 90 million Americans who perform at the two lowest skill levels would not be able to integrate or synthesize information in any complex way, and face "considerable difficulty" with advanced reading of problem-solving tasks.

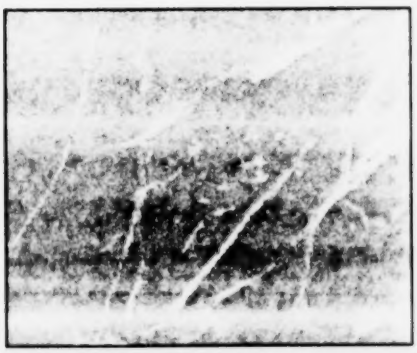
Approximately 33 percent of the participants, or about 61 million adults, had Level 3 skills. They could integrate information from long texts with relative ease and perform more complicated tasks where quantities needed to be inferred from the narrative.

The report acknowledged that many adults who tested at low levels nonetheless live full lives and hold good jobs. Interestingly, many of the participants testing in Levels 1 and 2 did not consid[er] themselves "at risk" because of their literacy skills. A majority of those in Level 1, and almost all of those in Level 2, described themselves as being able to read English "well" or "very well." Still, the study demonstrated striking connections between literacy, economic health, and citizenship participation.

Adults who performed at higher skill levels were more likely to have jobs, work more hours, and earn higher wages. Nearly half of all adults in the two lower skills levels were living in poverty. In addition, only one half of the adults performing at Level 1 had voted in the last five years compared to nearly 90 percent of the highest skills adults who had voted. The overall determination of the survey was that people "with limited literacy skills are likely to find it more challenging to pursue their goals."

The Department of Education will release further reports on selected subgroups through June 1994. These include reports from the 12 individual states, and reports on prison literacy, literacy and the labor force, literacy and schooling, literacy and older adults, English literacy of language minority groups, and literacy and political participation.

For further information on these reports and their release dates, contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20208-5641. Call 800/424-1616 or 202/219-1651. A full copy of the NALS report, entitled *Adult Literacy in America*, is available for approximately $16 from the U.S. Governme[nt] Printing Office. The order publication number is 065-000-00588-3. Call 202/78[illegible]



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